

JESUS, A REAL MAN

-A. Ralph Johnson

Some have claimed that there was no historical Jesus. They claim his existence was all a myth, derived from beliefs in ancient gods, or from Messianic hopes of the Jews.

The evidence that Jesus was a real person may be compared to the construction of a bridge. Some pieces are stronger and some not so strong. However, together they interact in such a way that they provide an overwhelmingly powerful support.

I. The New Testament writers testify to the humanity of Jesus.

Opponents would like to just rule them out but they are important historical documents which must be considered. They provide vital testimony and information which can be examined to understand and resolve the issue.

The New Testament writers are represented as companions of Jesus, or had relationships with those who knew him or were so closely involved that they would have known the facts they relate. This gives great weight to their testimony.

Matthew, Mark and Luke (including Acts) clearly present a historical Jesus. These are here lumped together as a single source because of their synoptic nature.

A. Matthew, who was an apostle and companion with Jesus (Mat 10:2-4) wrote an extensive biography of his life.

1. Eusebius [A.D. 260-340] (3.39.15 f) quotes Papias [A.D. 70-155.] (Papias, Fragments #6)
“Matthew put together the oracles [of the Lord] in the Hebrew language, and each one interpreted them as best he could.”

Eusebius says: *“Papias, an ancient man, who was a hearer of John, and a friend of Polycarp,”* -Fragments #1

Skeptics claim that because it says *“the oracles,”* it is speaking of a list of *“sayings”* attributed to Matthew rather than the book of Matthew.

Answer:

“Oracles” indicates revelations from God. It does not mean *“sayings”* and Eusebius does not speak of them as *“sayings.”* He speaks of the *Oracles* being *“put together,”* which suggests that he wrote a book. Nothing in his words precludes this from being the book attributed to Matthew. Indeed, the context is speaking of what the books of the Bible say about Jesus, specifying Mark, 1John, and Peter.

Furthermore, early writers did use *“oracles”* to refer to books of the Bible.

- a. Ignatius [AD 30-107] to the Smyrnaeans, 3 (Ante Nicene Fathers, vol 1, p.87)
For, say the [holy] oracles, "This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen Him go unto heaven."
(Footnote 13. Acts 1:11)
- b. Ignatius [AD 30-107] to the Magnesians, 9 (Quoting Gen. 3:19)
For say the [holy] oracles, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread."
- c. Clement: [153-193-217] Exhortations 8
*It is now time, as we have dispatched in order the other points, to go to the prophetic **Scriptures**; for the **oracles** present us with the appliances necessary for the attainment of piety, and so establish the truth. The divine **Scriptures** and institutions of wisdom form the short road to salvation.*
- d. Clement: [153-193-217] Instructor, Book 2, chapter 11
*...the varied and unfading **Scriptures**, the **oracles** of the Lord, resplendent with the rays of truth.*
- e. Gregory Thaumaturgus [A.D.205-240-265] Part 2, 2nd Homily
*And again, "Search the **Scriptures**, for in them ye think ye have eternal life." For on this account the treasure of the knowledge of God is revealed to them who search the divine **oracles**. That treasure of the inspired **Scriptures** the Paraclete has unfolded to us this day.*
- f. Constitutions of the Apostles, 6.5.XVIII (Quoting Leviticus 18:22)
*All these things are forbidden by the laws; for thus say the **oracles**: "Thou shalt not lie with mankind as with womankind."*
- g. Augustine, Confessions [A.D. 398], Book 12, Chapter 15
22. *"What say ye to me, O ye objectors whom I was addressing, and who yet believe that Moses was the holy servant of God, and that his **books** were the **oracles** of the Holy Ghost?"*

This is much like our common practice of speaking of the Bible as "*The word of God*," because it was given by God and contains revelations from God, though it also contains statements of the Devil and others.

The Bible uses similar terminology.

Rom. 2:28 says that to the Jews were committed the "*oracles of God*." He is not referring to some detached group of unrelated sayings. This obviously refers to the revelations contained in the Old Testament.

Acts 7:38 says that the fathers received the *lively oracles* to be give unto them. How were they given? Were they a group of unrelated sayings, or were they indeed God's word revealed in the books of the Old Testament?

Matthew was certainly written before the time of Papias (A.D. 70-155) because we find quotations from the book in writings as early as Clement (A.D. 30-100).

Skeptics try to get around this by claiming that Clement and others were quoting from a collection of sayings that pre-dated the Gospels. However, the fact that they quoted not only Matthew but also portions of Mark and Luke indicate the writers were familiar with all three.

We know he wrote before Luke because Luke seems to rely on information contained in Matthew. Since Luke wrote before the trial of Paul, about 63 A.D., before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., this letter cannot be dated later than about 60 A.D..

From the integrity manifested and intimate knowledge of the facts by the writer, we can see that he had to be very close to the events of the life of Christ that took place prior to the fall of Jerusalem.

- B. Mark, is represented by the Fathers as being written by John Mark, a young man who had close contact with the events that took place. He lived in Jerusalem (Acts 12:25) and his mother was Mary in whose house Christians met (Acts 12:12). He was related to Barnabas, one of the earliest disciples in Jerusalem (Acts 4:36; 9:27; Col. 4:10).

Eusebius (3.39.15 f) says of Papias [A.D. 70-155.] (Papias, Fragments #6)
“Mark who wrote the Gospel, which he [Papias] has given in the following words]: And the presbyter said this. Mark having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately whatsoever he remembered. It was not, however, in exact order that he related the sayings or deeds of Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor accompanied Him. But afterwards, as I said, he accompanied Peter, who accommodated his instructions to the necessities [of his hearers], but with no intention of giving a regular narrative of the Lord’s sayings. Wherefore Mark made no mistake in thus writing some things as he remembered them. For of one thing he took especial care, not to omit anything he had heard, and not to put anything fictitious into the statements.”

- C. The writer of Luke indicates he knew people who knew Jesus (Luke 1:1-2).

He wrote Acts before Paul was executed and before Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D. We know this because the book of Acts ends with Paul at Rome without telling the outcome of his trial. That would date it at around 63 A.D..

It is utterly improbable that if Acts had been written after the fall of Jerusalem that the outcome of Paul’s trial or Jerusalem’s destruction would have been omitted. The importance of pointing out the consequences of persecution of Christians by the Jews in fulfillment of Jesus’ predictions (Luke 21) would simply have been too strong to have been omitted. This firmly establishes the time of writing.

Luke wrote after Matthew and Mark, as indicated by the fact that he clearly relied upon information from those Gospels.

The importance of Luke and Acts having been written before the destruction of Jerusalem is that here we have a clear record of Jesus as a real person within 40 years after his death. It is not reasonable that the Christian community, so soon after the event, could have been deceived about the events of his life and related situations.

Those who argue for a date after the destruction of Jerusalem claim that the utter disruption of everything wiped out the earlier points of reference by which the Gospel claims could be checked by both Christians and outsiders alike. Such a claim fails to credit the fact that Roman and outside sources of information survived as well as that there were many who lived through the events. John himself, who was a companion of Jesus, lived to around 100 A.D. All points of reference are not eradicated by such a crisis. Rather, people are more likely to try to rescue and preserve such records. This is amply shown in how much evidence survived the holocaust and was used in the German trials.

Attempts have been made to show that Luke was not the writer of Luke and Acts.

The writer of Acts had to have been a traveler on the journeys of Paul.

1. He was familiar with the names of places, titles and people in the different locations.

“...Luke’s detailed accuracy – his ability to use the right technical title for the right official in one place after another throughout the provinces of the Roman Empire.

--F. F. Bruce *Jesus and Christian Origins outside the New Testament* p.201

Acts 17:6. Luke calls the city magistrates of Thessalonica “*politarchs*.” Politarchs are identified in 19 inscriptions, all in Macedonia, ranging from the second century B.C. to the third century B.C.. Five of these are the Politarchs of Thessalonica. It had Five *Politarchs* in the first century AD and six in the second century. (F.F.Bruce, p.201 quoting from E.D.Burton, “The Politarchs”, *American Journal of Theology* 2 1898, pp. 508 ff.)

Acts 19:35. The city “*temple keeper*” (*newkoros*) of the great goddess
-F.F.Bruce, p. 201

Acts 19:32, 39, 4. The “*assembly*” at Ephesus was called the “*eccleesia*.”

Acts 28:7. His correct use of the official title of the Maltese representative of the Roman Praetor of Sicily as the “*Protos*.”

2. The writer claims to have been a companion of Paul in his travels (the many “*we*” and “*us*” scriptures) is consistent with Paul’s own indications of Luke as his companion.

Philemon 1:23 *Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus, saluteth thee; 24 and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, **Luke, my fellow-workers.***

2Tim 4:10 *for Demas forsook me, having loved this present world, and went to Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. 11 **Only Luke is with me.***

Col. 4:14 ***Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas salute you.***

3. The medical references and scholarly style are consistent with Paul's mention of Luke as a physician (Hobart "*Medical Language of St. Paul*" and Harnack, "*Luke the Physician*" p. 15 f). Naturally, those who want to prove that Luke did not write it have denied this. Nevertheless many authorities remain convinced that these are consistent with the writings of a physician. Had there been no such scholarly style and use of medical terms, you can be sure the infidels would have quickly pounced on that.

Examples: "*kathapto*" (Acts 28:3); the medical description of Acts 28:8; "*pimprasthai*" (Acts 28:6).

4. The places and times where Paul indicated Luke was with him are consistent with where the writer of Acts indicates he was, and where Paul omits Luke as a companion, the writer of Acts does not use "we" or "us."

Col. 4:14; Phm 1:24. Paul writes from his imprisonment at Rome (4:10). Note the "we" and "us" passages at Rome in Acts 28.

On the other hand, when Paul was writing 1Thes 1:1; 2Thes 1:1; 2Cor 1:19 he mentions Silas and Timothy but not Luke. Compare Acts 18:5.

It has been objected that the "we" and "us" is a style of writing used in mariner accounts that really does not indicate Luke was there, and that the writer never uses the singular. This would certainly be an unusual and unlikely use, and simply cannot be shown to be the case with Luke. Furthermore, Luke uses the singular, "me" and also "we" and "us" when not speaking of seafaring.

Luke 1:1 *Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, 2 Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; 3 It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,*

"We" and "us" passages in Acts:

Acts 16:10. *And when he had seen the vision, straightway we sought to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that God had called US to preach the gospel to them. 11 Setting sail therefore from Troas, WE made a straight course to Samothrace, and the day following to Neapolis; 12 and from thence to Philippi, which is a city of Macedonia, the first of the district, a Roman colony: and WE were in this city tarrying certain days. 13 And on the sabbath day we went forth without the gate by a river side, where WE supposed there was a place of prayer; and WE sat down, and spake unto the women that were come together. 14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, one that worshipped God, heard US: whose heart the Lord opened to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul. 15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought US, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained US. 16 And it came to pass, as WE were going to the place of prayer, that a certain maid having a spirit of divination met US, who brought her masters much gain by soothsaying.*

17 The same following after Paul and US cried out, saying, These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim unto you the way of salvation.

Acts 20:5. But these had gone before, and were waiting for US at Troas. 6 And WE sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days, where WE tarried seven days. 7 And upon the first day of the week, when WE were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, intending to depart on the morrow; and prolonged his speech until midnight. 8 And there were many lights in the upper chamber where WE were gathered together. 13 But WE going before to the ship set sail for Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, intending himself to go by land.

14 And when he met US at Assos, WE took him in, and came to Mitylene.

15 And sailing from thence, WE came the following day over against Chios; and the next day WE touched at Samos; and the day after WE came to Miletus.

Acts 21:1 And when it came to pass that we were parted from them and had set sail, WE came with a straight course unto Cos, and the next day unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara: 2 and having found a ship crossing over unto Phoenicia, WE went aboard, and set sail. 3 And when WE had come in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left hand, WE sailed unto Syria, and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unlade her burden. 4 And having found the disciples, WE tarried there seven days: and these said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not set foot in Jerusalem. 5 And when it came to pass that WE had accomplished the days, WE departed and went on our journey; and they all, with wives and children, brought US on our way till WE were out of the city: and kneeling down on the beach, WE prayed, and bade EACH OTHER farewell; 6 and WE went on board the ship, but they returned home again. 7 And when WE had finished the voyage from Tyre, WE arrived at Ptolemais; and WE saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day. 8 And on the morrow WE departed, and came unto Caesarea: and entering into the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, WE abode with him. 9 Now this man had four virgin daughters, who prophesied. 10 And as WE tarried there some days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. 11 And coming to US, and taking Paul's girdle, he bound his own feet and hands, and said, Thus saith the Holy Spirit, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. 12 And when WE heard these things, both WE and they of that place besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, What do ye, weeping and breaking my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. 14 And when he would not be persuaded, WE ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done. 15 And after these days WE took up our baggage and went up to Jerusalem. 16 And there went with US also certain of the disciples from Caesarea, bringing with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom WE should lodge. 17 And when WE were come to Jerusalem, the US brethren received US gladly. 18 And the day following Paul went in with US unto James; and all the elders were present.

[Note that this places Luke right in Jerusalem where Paul addresses both the Jews and Agrippa where he gives the accounts of his conversion.]

Acts 27:1 And when it was determined that WE should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners to a centurion named Julius, of the Augustan band. 2 And embarking in a ship of Adramyttium, which was about to sail unto the places on the coast

of Asia, **WE** put to sea, Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with **US**. 3 And the next day **WE** touched at Sidon: and Julius treated Paul kindly, and gave him leave to go unto his friends and refresh himself. 4 And putting to sea from thence, **WE** sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. 5 And when **WE** had sailed across the sea which is off Cilicia and Pamphylia, **WE** came to Myra, a city of Lycia. 6 And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing for Italy; and he put **US** therein. 7 And when **WE** had sailed slowly many days, and were come with difficulty over against Cnidus, the wind not further suffering **US**, **WE** sailed under the lee of Crete, over against Salmone; 8 and with difficulty coasting along it **WE** came unto a certain place called Fair Havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea. 15 and when the ship was caught, and could not face the wind, **WE** gave way to it, and were driven. 16 And running under the lee of a small island called Cauda, **WE** were able, with difficulty, to secure the boat: 20 And when neither sun nor stars shone upon **US** for many days, and no small tempest lay on **US**, all hope that **WE** should be saved was now taken away. 29 And fearing lest haply **WE** should be cast ashore on rocky ground, they let go four anchors from the stern, and wished for the day. 37 And **WE** were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls.

Acts 28:1 And when **WE** were escaped, then **WE** knew that the island was called Melita. 2 And the barbarians showed us no common kindness; for they kindled a fire, and received **US** all, because of the present rain, and because of the cold. 7 Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man of the island, named Publius, who received **US**, and entertained **US** three days courteously. 8 And it was so, that the father of Publius lay sick of fever and dysentery: unto whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laying his hands on him healed him. 9 And when this was done, the rest also that had diseases in the island came, and were cured: 10 who also honored **US** with many honors; and when **WE** sailed, they put on board such things as **WE** needed. 11 And after three months **WE** set sail in a ship of Alexandria which had wintered in the island, whose sign was The Twin Brothers. 12 And touching at Syracuse, **WE** tarried there three days. 13 And from thence **WE** made a circuit, and arrived at Rhegium: and after one day a south wind sprang up, and on the second day **WE** came to Puteoli; 14 where **WE** found brethren, and were entreated to tarry with them seven days: and so **WE** came to Rome. 15 And from thence the brethren, when they heard of **US**, came to meet **US** as far as The Market of Appius and The Three Taverns; whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage. 16 And when **WE** entered into Rome, Paul was suffered to abide by himself with the soldier that guarded him.

5. The writer is obviously Greek, and writing to Theophilus, a Greek. Where he speaks of himself as being present, he is more detailed and uses more of his own Greek style than where he has to get his information from the Hebrews, where he uses more Hebraisms.
6. 11. Luke and Acts are cited by the fathers as early as the late first century, with no attempt to justify the claim. This suggests that they were already broadly accepted and well-known.

It seems that during the period when people were alive and acquainted with the facts, no one ever thought of questioning the date or authorship. Had anyone done so, early

fathers would surely have tried to answer the objection, as they commonly did on other things.

7. We have fragments of Luke as early as 120 AD, which suggests it was already well known and accepted.

-Justin Martyr (110-165) quoted from Luke (Luke 22:44; 23:46).

-Irenaeus (writing about 175 AD) identified Luke as the companion of Paul.

-Tatian's Diatessaron (around 170 AD) quotes from Luke.

-The Muratorian fragment (around 130 AD –Unger).

“The Acts of all the apostles, are written in a single book. Luke relates them admirably to Theophilus, confining himself to such as fell under his own notice, as he plainly shows by the omission of all reference either to the martyrdom of Peter or to the journey of Paul from Rome to Spain.”

8. There are things mentioned only by the writer of Luke and Acts which are also in the writings of Paul that suggest a close connection between the two writers, or at least a very close connection in time and proximity.

Luke and Paul alone record Jesus' appearance first to Peter of the apostles (Luke 24:34; 1Cor 15:5).

Luke and Paul alone make reference to the concept that *“the laborer is worthy of his hire”* (1Tim. 5:18; Luke 10:7)

- D. John was an apostle and companion with Jesus (Mat 10:2; Luke 6:14; Acts 1:13; John 19:35; 21:24; 1Jn. 1:1, 3). He wrote around 90 A.D.

All three of the other gospel writers affirm that John was with Jesus (Matt. 4:21; 10:2; Mark 1:19, 29; 3:17; 5:37; 9:2, 38; 10:35, 41; 13:3; 14:33; Luke 5:10; 6:14; 8:51; 9:49, 54; 22:8; Acts 1:13.)

John claimed to have been with Jesus and the other apostles, having touched him, and seen him die.

John 19:35. *And he that hath seen hath borne witness, and his witness is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye also may believe.*

1 John 1:1 *That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled concerning the Word of life 2 (and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us); 3 that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us: yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ:*

John flatly affirms that Jesus came in the flesh (1John 4:2-3; 2John 1:7)

1 John 4:2 *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that **Jesus Christ is come in the flesh** is of God: 3 And every spirit that confesseth not that **Jesus Christ is come in the flesh** is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.*

2John 1:7 *For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that **Jesus Christ is come in the flesh**.*

- E. Peter was an apostle and companion of Jesus (Mat 10:2; Luke 6:14; Acts 1:13). Tradition says he provided information to Mark for writing his Gospel.

Peter calls himself an “*apostle of Jesus Christ*,” (1Pet 1:1; 2Pet 1:1) which is confirmed by Mat. 10:2; Luke 6:13-14; Acts 1:2; 13, 26; 2:37. To be one of the twelve, he had to have walked with Christ.

Acts 1:21 *Wherefore of these men which have **COMPANIED WITH US all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us**, 22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a **witness** with us of his resurrection.*

1 Peter 5:1 *The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a **witness of the sufferings of Christ**,*

2Peter 1:16 *For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but **were eyewitnesses of his majesty**. 17 For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. 18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when **we were with him in the holy mount**.*

This event is confirmed by three of the gospel writers (Mat 17:1-5; Mark 9:2-7; 9:28-35) Peter clearly speaks of a fleshly Jesus.

In his letters Peter indicates a living Jesus:

1Pet 1:2, 19. He had “*blood*.”

1Pet 1:3 . He was raised from the dead

1Pet 2:21 *For even hereunto were ye called: because **Christ also suffered** for us, leaving us an example, that ye should **follow his steps**: 22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: 23 Who, when **he was reviled**, reviled not again; when he **suffered**, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: 24 Who his own self bare our sins **in his own body on the tree**, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose **stripes** ye were healed.*

1Peter 3:18 *For Christ also hath once **suffered** for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being **put to death in the flesh**, but made alive in the Spirit:*

1Pet 3:21; He was resurrected

1 Peter 4:1 *Forasmuch then as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh*

- F. Paul knew the apostles who were companions of Jesus and also others who knew Him (Col. 4:14; 2Tim 4:11; Ph'm 24; Acts 15:4, 7, 13; 21:18; Rom 16:17; Gal 1:18-19; 2:9, 11, 14).

Peter refers to the epistles of Paul as already being in existence, which he says the *ignorant and unsteadfast wrest to their own destruction.* (2Peter 3:15-16)

Paul clearly describes a historical Jesus.

Some have claimed that because Paul gave very few details of Jesus as a historical figure that he held to a “mythical view” of him. This is simply not true. Paul gives much clear indication of Jesus as a real person.

There are several reasons for Paul’s not giving a lot of the details of his life. One is that Paul was not one of Jesus’ companions so personal illustrations were less likely. Another reason involved the people to whom he wrote. He wrote to churches and Christians who already believed in Jesus and had accepted him as a real person. A third, related reason, was that the design of his letters did not call for giving a history of Jesus. He left the Biography of Jesus to others, and concentrated upon the basics of the Gospel – his death, burial and resurrection.

Paul did not give a lot of detail about his own life. We know nothing of his parents and only a mention or two of his family. Was he married? Where was he born? What about his childhood? How did he come to be a part of the Jewish powers in Jerusalem? In fact, except for the Book of Acts, we would have no account of the details of his conversion.

Let’s consider just how much Paul said about a living Jesus and compare that with other New Testament writers.

1. Rom 1:3 *Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was **made of the SEED OF DAVID ACCORDING TO THE FLESH.***

“Seed of David”

John 7:42 *Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the **seed of David,** and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?*

2 Timothy 2:8 *Remember that Jesus Christ of the **seed of David** was raised from the dead according to my gospel:*

Acts 13:23-35 Paul himself spoke of Jesus as the “**seed of David,**” dated his coming with the preaching of John the Baptist, said that their rulers in Jerusalem condemned him, they desired Pilate to kill him. He was taken

down from the tree, and laid him in a tomb. He was raised and was seen many days of them who came up with him to Galilee.

Compare:

Hebrews 2:16 *For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the **seed** of Abraham.*

Paul speaks of himself as of the “**seed** of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.”
(Rom 11:1; 2Cor 11:22) He was not saying he was a myth!

“*Flesh*” as used by Paul, was a description of a real person, not a myth.
(1Cor 15:50; Gal 1:16; Eph 6:12)

2. Paul, in Acts 13:23-37 describes a historical Jesus.

*23 Of this man's [David's] **seed** hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus: 24 When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. 25 And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose.*

26 Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent. 27 For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him. 28 And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. 29 And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre. 30 But God raised him from the dead: 31 And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. 32 And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, 33 God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. 34 And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. 35 Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. 36 For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: 37 But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.

3. Paul said that Jesus was a “**MAN**”

Rom 5:15. *by one **MAN**, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.*

Compare the following:

Luke 24:7. *The Son of **man** must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.*

Luke 23:4. *Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this **MAN**.*

Luke 23:18. *And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this **MAN**, and release unto us Barabbas:*

John 7:46. *The officers answered, Never MAN spake like this MAN.*

Philip 2:7, 8. *He took the “form of a servant” and the likeness of men, and being found in the fashion of a MAN he died on the cross.*

4. Rom 9:5. *Whose are the fathers, and of whom [Israel] as **CONCERNING THE FLESH CHRIST CAME**, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.*
5. Galatians 4:4 Jesus was “**MADE OF A WOMAN, MADE UNDER THE LAW.**”
6. Paul said Jesus had a **BROTHER** named James.

Galatians 1:19 *But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord’s brother.*

Matthew 13:55-56 *Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Judas? 56 And his sisters, are they not all with us? (compare Mat. 12:46-47; Mark 3:31-32; 6:3; Luke 8:19-20)*

Compare 1Cor 9:5, which speaks of “*brethren of the lord*” (distinguished from the apostles and Cephas.)

Compare Josephus, Antiquities, Book 20, chapter 9:1 (200)

“Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the sanhedrim of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, [or, some of his companions]; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned.”

7. 1Thes 2:14-15 “*Jews*” killed the Lord Jesus.

*14 For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: 15 Who both **KILLED THE LORD JESUS**, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men:*

8. 1Cor. 15:1-8. Paul speaks of Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection as a person.

*“3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ **DIED** for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was **BURIED**, and that he **ROSE again the third day** according to the scriptures: 5 And that he was **SEEN OF CEPHAS, THEN OF THE TWELVE**: 6 After that, he was **SEEN OF ABOVE FIVE HUNDRED BRETHREN AT ONCE**; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. 7 After that, he was **SEEN OF JAMES; THEN OF ALL THE APOSTLES**. 8 And last of all he was **SEEN OF ME** also, as of one born out of due time.”*

“*Died*” “*buried*” and “*rose again the third day*” clearly indicate a historical event. Claims that this is some mythical symbolic description make not a lick of sense.

“*Seen of Cephas*” is clearly recorded as a historical event (Luke 24:34). Cephas was Peter (John 1:40-42; Gal 2:7-9).

“*Then of the twelve*” (Luke 24:33, 36) -- possibly including Matthias, or simply speaking of the group known as “*the twelve*.” The “*twelve*” was used to identify the apostles who were chosen from those who walked with Jesus (Mat 10:2; 20:17; 26:20; John 6:67; 20:24; Acts 1:2-3, 13, 21-22; 6:2)

“*After that, he was SEEN of above five hundred brethren at once...*” This occasion is not mentioned in the gospels, but Paul clearly regards it as historical. Paul had personal acquaintance with those who were with Jesus (Peter, James and John) and even went to talk to them to see if he had been in error about what he was preaching (Gal. 2:2), which seemed to be the same as theirs (Gal 2:6).

The claim that because Paul used the same word, (“*seen*”) with reference to the others, as to himself, that therefore the appearances to the others was only some sort of illusion, is pure nonsense. The word “*seen*” (#3700 *optanomai*) is a common Greek word which like most other words may be used either literally, (Acts 20:25; John 19:37; Heb. 13:23) or figuratively. The normal literal use is to be understood unless something in the context indicates it is figurative. Nothing in 1Cor. 15 so indicates.

While Paul says he saw Jesus in a “*vision*,” (Acts 26:19), the accounts by others were never identified as being visions. When Jesus appeared to the disciples he said he was not a spirit because he had *flesh and bone* (Luke 24:39). He told them to put their fingers in the holes from the nails and the spear (John 20:27). At one appearance he ate fish and a honeycomb (Luke 24:43-44). None of these are represented as an illusion. The events to which Paul refers were before his vision, and neither the other writers nor Paul called them visions.

9. Philip 2:5-8.

*5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was **MADE IN THE LIKENESS OF MEN**; 8 And being found in **FASHION AS A MAN**, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto **DEATH**, even the **DEATH OF THE CROSS**.*

That is very similar to John the first chapter which says “*THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US*” and at the end of all four Gospels was said to be *crucified*.

10. Rom 14:9. “*Christ both **DIED**, and rose, and revived*”

11. 1Cor 2:8. *Which none of the RULERS [archwn] OF THIS WORLD knew: for had they known it, they would not have **CRUCIFIED** the Lord of glory.*

OBJECTION: “These were demonic spiritual rulers of a spiritual realm where Christ was mythically crucified”

ANSWER:

- a. Nothing in the context says anything about this being “demonic spiritual powers.”
- b. The “*rulers*” [*archwn*] of this world cannot be Satan because he and the demons clearly knew who Jesus was (Luke 4:41; Mat. 8:29; Mark 1:23-24; 3:11; 5:7; Luke 4:34; Acts 19:15; James 2:19), and indeed it was the Devil himself who induced Judas to betray him (John 13:2). The devil would surely have crucified Jesus.
- c. The reference to him being “*crucified*” suggests the type of execution then being practiced as described in the Gospels.

1Cor 1:3. *But we preach Christ CRUCIFIED, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;*
(Clearly, the crucifixion of Jesus did not fit into Greek mythology)

2Cor 13:4. *For though HE WAS CRUCIFIED through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God.*

Gal 3:13. *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that HANGS ON A TREE:*

Ph’p 2:8. *And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the DEATH OF THE CROSS.*

- d. Consider the references to “*Rulers*” [*archon*] by Paul and Luke.

Romans 13:3 Paul uses the same word [*archon*] to refer to rulers to whom we are to submit because they do not “bear the sword in vain.”

Luke uses the same word to describe those who crucified Jesus (Luke 23:13, 35)

Luke 24:20 *and how the chief priests and our rulers [archon] delivered him up [paradidomi] to be condemned to death, and crucified him.*

Acts 3:14 *But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; 15 And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. 17 And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your RULERS [archon].*

Acts 4:26 *The kings of the earth stood up, and the RULERS [archwn] were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. 27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both HEROD, and PONTIUS PILATE, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,*

(1Tim 6:13. *before Christ Jesus, who before PONTIUS PILATE witnessed a good confession*)

Acts 13:27. *Paul said that they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their RULERS [archwn], because they knew him not,... they have fulfilled them in condemning him. 28 And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain.*

- e. The context of 1Cor 2:8 clearly shows that his reference to princes of this world refers to men.

--Verse 4 speaks of this as “*MAN’S WISDOM*” (cf. 2:5 “wisdom of men”).

--Verse 6 calls it the “*WISDOM OF THIS WORLD.*”

--Verses 11, 13 and 14 continue to speak of this in connection with “*MAN*”

- f. Those who crucified him could not have been in some “demonic spirit realm” because it says “*RULERS OF THIS WORLD.*”

“*This World*” [aiwn] in the context refers to that age, not to some mythical realm in some other.

1Corinthians 1:20. *Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of THIS WORLD [auwb]? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of THE WORLD? [aiwn]*

1Corinthians 2:6. *We speak wisdom, however, among them that are fullgrown: yet a wisdom not of THIS WORLD [aion], nor of the rulers [archwn] of THIS WORLD [aiwn], who are coming to nought:*

1Corinthians 3:18. *Let no man deceive himself. If any man thinketh that he is wise among you in THIS WORLD [aiwn], let him become a fool, that he may become wise.*

12. Eph. 2:13-15 speaks of Christ as having “**BLOOD**” and that he came in the “**flesh.**”

13. 1Thes 2:14-15. Paul said the **Jews** in Palestine “**KILLED** the lord Jesus.”

14. 1Tim. 1:15. Paul says that “**Jesus CAME INTO THE WORLD.**”

15. 1Tim. 2:5. Paul calls Jesus a “**MAN.**”

16. 1Tim. 6:13. Paul says that Jesus “*witnessed a good confession **BEFORE PONTIUS PILATE.***”

17. 2Tim. 2:8. Paul says that Christ was of the “**SEED OF DAVID.**” This agrees with the Gospel writers that he was born as a descendent of David.

18. 1Tim. 3:16. *And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; He who was **MANIFESTED IN THE FLESH**, Justified in the spirit, Seen of angels, Preached among the nations, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.*

Paul was not limited to a strictly visionary knowledge of Christ. His own words, also confirmed by Acts, show that Christianity was quite widespread before his conversion and he was therefore able to confirm Jesus existence in the flesh.

-Gal. 1:13, 23; 1Cor 15:9. Paul says he *persecuted the church of God*, which therefore was an active community before his vision.

-Gal 1:16-19

17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. 18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. 19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

-Gal. 2:9. Peter, James and John, were "*reputed to be pillars of the church.*"

By the time Paul wrote, he was well acquainted with those who had known Jesus personally and clearly held the same views of Jesus in the flesh.

Paul did not know Jesus personally and had no intention of writing a biography, therefore he makes few references to things Jesus said or did. This is not surprising since Paul says little about his own life. Some complain that he says nothing about Jesus' mother but neither does he tell us the names of his own father or mother.

We have no clear indication that Paul had even read any of the Gospels. Luke and Acts were not written until just after his imprisonment at Rome, and Paul spent most of his efforts abroad. However, he did have contact with those who were in Christ before him (Rom 16:7; 1Cor 15:8 etc) and checked with them to make sure that he had not run in vain (Gal. 2:2).

It is clear that he accepted the same teachings of Christ as in the Gospels and preached them.

(1) 1Corinthians 4:12 -- *When reviled we bless, when persecuted we endure.*

-Romans 12:14 -- *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.*

-Luke 6:28 -- *Bless those who curse you; pray for those who abuse you.*

(2) 1Thessalonians 5:15 -- *See that none of you repays evil for evil.*

-Romans 12:17-- *Repay no one evil for evil.*

-Matthew 5:39: *Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also.*

(3) Romans 13:7 -- *Pay all of them their dues, taxes to whom taxes are due.*

- Matthew 22:15-22, and particularly -- “Render . . . to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s.”
- (4) Romans 14:13 -- *Then let us no more pass judgment on one another...*
 -Matthew 7: 1 -- *Judge not, that you be not judged.*
- (5) Romans 14:14 -- *Nothing is unclean in itself.*
 -1Corinthians 6:12 -- “*All things are lawful for me...*”
 -1Corinthians 10:25-26 -- “*Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience for “the earth and its fullness are the Lord’s.”*”
 -Galatians 2: 11-16 (the issue was Peter’s eating unclean food before the Brothers of James showed up, and then his hypocrisy after their arrival).
 -Mark 7:18-19 -- “*Do you not see that whatever goes into a man from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and so passes on? Thus he declared all foods clean.*”
- (6) 1Thessalonians 5:2 -- *The day of the Lord will come like a thief [kleptis] in the night.*
 -Luke 12:39-40 -- *If the householder had known at what hour the thief [kleptis] was coming, he would have been awake You also must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect.*
 -Matthew 24:42-43) [This one has been hotly debated ... it is nearly strong enough to be classified as a quote, but in general it appears more to be in the paraphrastic background of Paul’s statement.]
- (7) 1Thessalonians 5: 13 -- *Be at peace among yourselves.*
 Mark 9:50: *Be at peace with one another.* [Calvin Roetzel thinks that is a direct quote. I think it may be too, but it’s general enough that forcing the issue isn’t worth it. It IS almost certainly a paraphrastic reference.]
- (8) 1Corinthians 13:2 -- *If I have all faith, so as to remove mountains...*
 Matthew 17:20 -- *If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, “Move hence . . . “ and it will move.* [The saying of Jesus recorded in Matthew is clearly a paraphrastic foundation for Paul’s own words. The Vocabulary and grammar are determinative here.]
- (9) 1Corinthians 13:2 -- *If I have all faith, so as to remove mountains...*
 Matthew 17:20 -- *If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, “Move hence . . . “ and it will move.* [The saying of Jesus recorded in Matthew is clearly a paraphrastic foundation for Paul’s own words. The Vocabulary and grammar are determinative here.]
- (10) Paul refers to the last supper in almost identical terms as the synoptic Gospels. (Matt 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; especially, Luke 22:19-20).

Note: The caps below are to show the parallel wording found in 1Cor. 11.

1Cor 11:23 *For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when **he** was betrayed **took bread**, 24 **and when he had given thanks, he broke it**, and said, “**this is my body which is for you. do this in remembrance of me.**” 25 In the same way **likewise the cup after supper, saying, “this cup is the new covenant in my blood. do this**, as often as you drink it, **in remembrance of me.**” 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.*

Mat 26:26 *Now as they were eating, Jesus **took bread**, and **blessed**, and **broke it**, and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; **this is my body.**” 27 And he took a **cup**, and **when he had given thanks** he gave it to them, saying, “**drink of it**, all of you; 28 for **this is my blood of the covenant**, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”*

Mark 14:22 *And as they were eating, **he took bread**, and **blessed**, and **broke it**, and gave it to them, **and said**, “Take; **this is my body.**” 23 and he took a cup, and **when he had given thanks** he gave it to them, and they **drank** of it. 24 And he said to them, “**this is my blood of the covenant**, which is poured out for many.*

Again, we see that Mark’s account is quite similar but even shorter, and limited in parallels.

Now compare 1Cor with Luke’s account.

Luke 22:17 *And he took a cup, **and when he had given thanks** he said, “Take this, and divide it among yourselves; 18 for I tell you that from now on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” 19 And **he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it** and gave it to them, saying, **This is my body which is given for you. do this in remembrance of me.**” 20 And **likewise the cup after supper, saying, “This cup** which is poured out for you is **the new covenant in my blood.**” 21 But, behold, the hand of him that **betrayeth** [paradidwmi] me is with me on the table. 22 And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is **betrayed!** [paradidwmi]*

48 *But Jesus said unto him, Judas, **betrayest** [paradidwmi] thou the Son of man with a kiss?*

Consider the parallels between Luke and Paul’s account:

Luke 22:19 ***he took bread,***

1Cor 11:23. *on the night when **He** was betrayed, **took bread***

Luke 22:19 ***and when he had given thanks he broke it***

1Cor 11:24 ***and when he had given thanks, he broke it***

Luke 22:19 *This is my body which is given for you.*
1Cor 11:24 *This is my body which is for you.*

Luke 22:19 *Do this in remembrance of me.*
1Cor 11:24 *Do this in remembrance of me.”*

Luke 22:20 *likewise the cup after supper,*
1Cor 11:25 *likewise the cup after supper,*

Luke 22:20 *saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”*
1Cor 11:25 *saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood*

Luke 22:19 *do this in remembrance of me.”*
1Cor 11:25 *do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”*

Objection: “*Betrayed*” refers to him being “*delivered up*” (*paradidomi*) by God (Isaiah 53:6) in a mystical sense, or to him delivering himself up.

ANSWER:

In 1Cor. 11:23 “*betrayed*” is a translation of “*paradidwmi*” (3860) which is also translated “*delivered*” in the same verse. The context determines who did the delivering, and whether it is speaking symbolically or not.

“*Betrayed*” here is indicative aorist passive, showing that it was not something he did, but something done to him.

The event recalled here is obviously the last supper, recorded in the synoptics, as shown by the almost identical wording. Who “*delivered*” him?

Luke 22:3 *Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. 4 And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might BETRAY [paradidwmi] him unto them. 5 And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. 6 And he promised, and sought opportunity to BETRAY [paradidwmi] him unto them in the absence of the multitude. 7 Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed. 8 And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat.*

In the very next verse after his statement about the significance of the supper Jesus continues:

Luke 22:21 *But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth [paradidwmi] me is with me on the table. 22 And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed! [paradidwmi]*

A little later in the same chapter, the same night in the Garden it said:

Luke 22:48 *But Jesus said unto him, Judas, **betrayest** [paradidwmi] thou the Son of man with a kiss?*

In the next chapter it says:

Luke 23:25 *And he [Pilate] released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he **delivered** [paradidwmi] Jesus to their will.*

After the resurrection, “two men” remind the disciples:

Luke 24:7 *Saying, The Son of man must be **delivered** [paradidwmi] into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.*

Later, the disciples speak of the occasion similarly.

Luke 24:20 *And how the chief priests and our rulers **delivered** [paradidwmi] him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.*

- G. The writer of Hebrews (Paul? Barnabas? Apollos?), who wrote before the destruction of the temple (Heb 8:4), likewise speaks of a living Jesus.

It makes no sense whatever that in the period of some 40 years between the death of Jesus and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D, that a false detailed story of his life as a man who preached and was publicly crucified, would be accepted by thousands of people as genuine. The people, the records, the places and events were too close for them to have been accepted without question by Christians and if false, surely would have been challenged by the Jews and pagans.

Heb. 2: 14. *Forasmuch then as **the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death** he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; 15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. 16 For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the **seed of Abraham**. [Compare Gal. 1:16; 1Cor. 15:50; Eph. 6:12] 17 Wherefore **in all things** it behoved him to be **made like unto his brethren**, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.*

Note: “**Flesh and blood**” throughout the New Testament speaks of people. (Mat 16:17; 1Cor 15:50; Gal 1:16; Eph 6:12)

He took flesh and blood “**that through death...**” shows that he took flesh and blood in order to die as a man.

“**Seed of Abraham**” refers to him as a man, born of Abraham. (2Cor 11:22; Rom 11:1)

Heb. 4:12 says he was “*was in all points **tempted like as we are.***”

To be tempted in all points like us, he would have had to live in the flesh, just as Heb 5:7 says.

Heb. 5:7. Who *in the days of his flesh*, when he had **offered up prayers** and supplications with strong **crying** and **tears** unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; 8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he **suffered**;

Hebrews 2:3. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by **them that heard him**;

Heb 7:12. For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. 13 For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to **another tribe**, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. 14 For it is evident that **our lord sprang out of Judah**; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

Heb. 8:3; 10:12 calls Jesus a “**man**.”

Heb. 10:5. Wherefore when he **cometh into the world**, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a **body** hast thou prepared me:

Heb. 10:10 says that the “**body**” of Jesus was offered.

Heb. 10:19; 13:12 says he had “**blood**.”

OBJECTION: Heb. 8:4 says that Jesus was not on earth.

Hebrews 8:4 “*For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law*”

ANSWER:

This speaks of the present when he serves in heaven, rather than of the past when he lived in the flesh. At that time he had passed into the heavens (Heb. 4:14) and sat down at the right hand of God (Heb 10:4).

According to the Law of Moses, only those who descended from Aaron could be priests (Heb. 7:12-14). Under the Law, Christ could not be a priest since he was of “**another tribe**” (referring to the fact that Jesus was born of the tribe of Judah).

Christ’s priesthood is in heaven. The mention of him belonging to the tribe of Judah indicates he was born.

Hebrews 4:14. Jesus “**passed into the heavens**.” (Compare Heb 9:24; 1Pet. 3:22) See also Acts 2:34 where Jesus is contrasted with David who had not ascended into the heavens.

OBJECTION: Heb 7:3 represents Jesus as a mythical person.

Heb 7:3 *Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.*

ANSWER:

This is speaking of Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham and who Abraham blessed and to whom he gave tithes “*like unto the son of*

God.” The priesthood of Melchisedec was like unto that of Jesus in that he appears in scripture with no indication of parents or anyone following him. Since the priesthood of Jesus is not on earth where he had a physical mother, but in heaven where his divine nature has no physical father or mother, the picture fits.

The comparison is between the earthly priesthood of Aaron and the heavenly priesthood of Jesus. The priesthood of Melchisedec was superior because it was not dependent upon anyone preceding or following. Earthly priests died and others replaced them while Jesus once for all offered his own blood and is a priest forever.

Indeed, as pointed out above, the verses that follow this clearly show that Jesus was “*of the tribe of Judah*” (Heb 7:13-14).

Jesus is not pictured as some “Myth” but as a real person. He is called a “*man*” (Heb 7:4)

- II. The earliest Apostolic Fathers speak of the gospels, quote from them, and describe Jesus as a real person.

Ignatius. [A.D. 30-107.] Epistle of Ignatius To the Ephesians, Chapter 15 (Apostolic Fathers, Vol. 1)

*“Our Lord and God, Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, first **did and then taught, as Luke testifies**, “whose praise is in the Gospel through all the Churches.” (cf. 2Cor 8:16)*

Ignatius also indicates Luke wrote Acts:

Ignatius, [A.D. 30-107.] Chapter 23

*Simon the Samaritan was that magician of whom **Luke**, the disciple and follower of the apostles, says, “But there was a certain man, Simon by name, who beforetime used magical arts in that city, and led astray the people of Samaria, declaring that he himself was some great one, to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This is the power of God, which is called great. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had driven them mad by his sorceress.*

(See Acts 8:9-11).

Compare Irenaeus, [A.D. 120-202.] Book 1, Chapter 27

*“Besides this, he [Marcion] mutilates the **Gospel which is according to Luke**, removing all that is written respecting the generation of the Lord, and setting aside a great deal of the teaching of the Lord, in which the Lord is recorded as most clearly confessing that the Maker of this universe is His Father.”*

Ignatius, [A.D. 30-107.] Epistle To the Trallians, Chapter 10 –

*“And when He had lived among men for thirty years, **He was baptized by John, really and not in appearance**; and when He had **preached the Gospel three years**, and done signs and wonders, He who was Himself the Judge was **judged by the Jews**, falsely so*

called, and by Pilate the governor; was scourged, was smitten on the cheek, was spit upon; He wore a crown of thorns and a purple robe; He was condemned:”

Ignatius [A.D. 30-107], To the Magnesians, chapter 11 (longer)

*Christ, who was begotten by the Father before all ages, but was afterwards **born of the Virgin Mary** without any intercourse with man. He also lived a holy life, and healed every kind of sickness and disease among the people, and wrought signs and wonders for the benefit of men; and to those who had fallen into the error of polytheism He made known the one and only true God, His Father, and underwent the passion, **and endured the cross at the hands of the Christ-killing Jews, under Pontius Pilate the governor and Herod the king.** He also died, and rose again, and ascended into the heavens*

Clement [AD 30-100] First Epistle, Chap. 46 (A.N.F. Vol. 1, p.18)

*Remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, how HE SAID, “**woe to that man [by whom [offenses come]! It were better for him that he had never been born, than that he should cast a stumbling-block before one of my elect. Yea, it were better for him that a millstone should be hung about [his neck], and he should be sunk in the depths of the sea,***

Footnote. Compare. Matt 18:6; 26:24; Mark 9:42; Luke 17:2

*Mat 26:24 **The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born.***

*42 And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is **better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.***

*Matt 18:6. 6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, **it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.***

*Luke 17:2. **it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.***

Clement [AD 30-100] First Epistle, Chap. 13 (A.N.F. Vol. 1, p.8)

*being especially mindful of the words of the Lord Jesus which He spake, teaching us meekness and long-suffering. **For thus he spoke: “be ye merciful, that ye may obtain mercy; forgive, that it may be forgiven to you; as ye do, so shall it be done unto you; as ye judge, so shall ye be judged; as ye are kind, so shall kindness be shown to you; with what measure ye mete, with the same measure it shall be measured unto you.”***

Footnote. Matt. 6:12-15; 7:2; Luke 6:36-39.

*Matt. 6:12 **And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. 14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you: 15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.***

Matt. 7:2 *For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*

Luke 6:36 *be ye therefore merciful 37 forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: 38 with the same measure that ye mete withal the same measure it shall be measured to you again.*

Barnabas [AD 100] Chapter 5 (ANF, Vol 1, p. 139)

“while he dwelt on earth, that He, when He has raised mankind, will also judge them. Moreover, teaching Israel, and doing so great miracles and signs, he preached [the truth] to him, and greatly loved him. But when he chose his own apostles who were to preach His Gospel, [He did so from among those] who were sinners above all sin, that He might show He came “not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Footnote 12.

Matthew 9:13 *But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

Mark 2:17 *When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

Luke 5:32 *I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”*

Note: Here, within 70 years of the death of Christ, Barnabas both speaks of him as an actual person and quotes from at least one of the Gospels.

Those who attempt to dispute the historical person of Jesus are faced with the horns of a dilemma. In order to have time for the “Jesus Myth” to be accepted, they must push the gospels to late dates, against all of the contrary evidence. However, in doing so they are faced with the problem that the farther they push the accounts away from the time given for the events, the more difficult it would be to write an informed credible account including the many details of his life, the events and the people of Palestine.

III. External sources

Some have claimed that the limited number of external witnesses indicate there was no real Jesus. However, what they fail to see is that due to the depredations of time, there are few records of history outside the Bible during this period. The closer to Jesus one gets, the less likely of any mention of him and of the records surviving. From Livy (17 AD to Tacitus, almost nothing has survived. Israel was a small insignificant part of the empire and only as Christianity grew, and became a real problem in the empire, would it have been given notice in the records.

A. Josephus [Around 75 AD]

1. Antiquities Book 18, chap 3 (63-64) (Often referred to as the “Testimonium Flavianum”)

3. (63) *Now, there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works — a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. **He was [the] Christ;***

(64) *and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.*

Because this statement is not cited by Christians before the time of Eusebius and because it seems improbable that Josephus would have been a Christian, most scholars believe this is an interpolation, either in whole or in part. Those who believe it was in part suggest that just a few phrases were added, which when removed, fit the style of Josephus.

This possibility is clearly suggested by the Arabic text of Josephus in which the passage says:

*“At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. And his conduct was good, and (He) was known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and the other nations became his disciples. **Pilate condemned Him to be crucified and to die.** And those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that He had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that He was alive; accordingly, **He was perhaps the Messiah** concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders.”*

-1971 discovery by Israeli historian Schlomo Pines, from Agapius’s tenth-century Universal History in Arabic,. (See Jesus outside the N.T. by Robert E. Van Voorst.)

2. Antiquities, Book 20, chapter 9:1 (200)

*“Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the sanhedrim of judges, and brought before them the **brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James**, and some others, [or, some of his companions]; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned:”*

Note. Unlike Paul, Josephus does not call James “*the brother of the Lord*” (Gal 1:19). In the Greek Josephus says, “*James, the brother of Jesus the one called Christ.*” That does not suggest that Josephus was a believer.

Had this been a Christian interpolation it would likely have stated he was the Christ, as in the Testimonium Flavianum, rather than that he was “**called Christ.**”)

It has been objected that the phrase, “*Jesus who was called Christ,*” is found in the Bible, thus making it suspect as an interpolation.

The similar phrase is found three times in Matthew, and once in John with a single word missing.

Matthew 1:16 *and Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.*

[*Ieesous ho legomenos Cristos*]

Matthew 27:17 *...Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?*

[*Ieesous ton legomenon Criston*]

Matthew 27:22 *Pilate saith unto them, What then shall I do unto Jesus who is called Christ?*

[*Ieesoun ton legomenon Criston*]

John 4:25. *the woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh (he that is called Christ): when he is come, he will declare unto us all things.*

[*ho legomenos Cristos*]

Note that three of the statements are made by non-believers who, just like Josephus would speak this way. The fourth is merely an objective expression.

The phrases do not affirm that Jesus is the Christ, as is the common reference to Jesus elsewhere.

The following are some samples of how it would be expressed if expressed by a Christian.

Matthew 16:20. *Then charged he the disciples that they should tell no man that he was the Christ.*

“estin ho Cristos”

Mark 1:1 *The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*

[*Ihsou Cristou*]

John 20:31 *but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; [Ieesous estin ho Cristos]*

It is further objected that Josephus would not have used the word “Christ” because he nowhere else used it, even when others were attributed Messianic claims.

ANSWER: “*Christ*” was a well-known Greek word and there is really no good reason why it could not have been used. In this case, it is used to distinguish him from others called “*Jesus*”

Jesus, who was the brother of Onias, Book 12, chap.5.1 (238);

“*Jesus the son of Phabel*” Book 15, chap. 9.3 (322)

“*Jesus the son of Sie*” Book 17, chap. 13.1 (341)

Most scholars accept that Josephus wrote this statement. One reason is that had Christians tampered with it, they would likely have made a stronger statement for Jesus as the Christ, as in the Testimonium Flavianum (*Antiquities*, Book 18, chap 3:3 (63) above). A second reason is that removal of the statement would leave problems in the context. Furthermore the language seems to be in the style of Josephus.

The strongest argument against its validity is that it is not quoted by any early Christian writer even though they were well acquainted with and often cited other things in Josephus. Of course, since this passage does not actually affirm that Jesus was Christ, those writers may not have considered it of great importance in early disputes when the issue was not whether Jesus lived but whether he was Christ.

In any case, this statement is found in all copies of Josephus.

- B. Tacitus [120 AD] wrote of Nero's blaming the Christians for the burning of Rome and states that Christ was crucified by Pilate. The accusation indicates they were a widespread group by 64 AD. (Tacitus, *Annals*, xv.44: *multitudo ingens*).

[2] *But neither human effort nor the emperor's generosity nor the placating of the gods ended the scandalous belief that the fire had been ordered. Therefore, to put down the rumor, Nero substituted as culprits and punished in the most unusual ways those hated for their shameful acts, whom the crowd called "Chrestians."* [3] ***The founder of this name, Christ, had been executed in the reign of Tiberius by the procurator Pontius Pilate*** [*Auctor nominis eius Christus Tiberio imperitante per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio adfectus erat*] *Suppressed for a time, the deadly superstition erupted again not only in Judea, the origin of this evil, but also in the city [Rome], where all things horrible and shameful from everywhere come together and become popular. [4] Therefore, first those who admitted to it were arrested, then on their information a very large multitude was convicted, not so much for the crime of arson as for hatred of the human race [odium humani generis]. Derision was added to their end: they were covered with the skins of wild animals and torn to death by dogs; or they were crucified and when the day ended they were burned as torches. [5] Nero provided his gardens for the spectacle and gave a show in his circus, mixing with the people in charioteer's clothing, or standing on his racing chariot. Therefore a feeling of pity arose despite a guilt which deserved the most exemplary punishment, because it was felt that they were being destroyed not for the public good but for the ferocity of one man.*

- C. Suetonius [130 AD], contemporary with Tacitus says "*The Christians, a set of men of a new and mischievous [or magical] superstition, were punished*"
-ISBE Vol. 8, Rome and the Christians

Suetonius also says, "*He [Claudius -AD 41-54] expelled the Jews from Rome [49 AD] since they were always making disturbance because of the instigator **Chrestus**.*"

-Trans Robert E. Van Voorst

(Suetonius Claudius 25: *Iudaeos impulsore Chresto assidue tumultuantis Roma expulit*),

(Compare Acts 18:2)

- D. Pliny the younger [110 AD] wrote a letter to the Emperor, Trajan indicating they were a very numerous people at his time and that they believed in Christ.

“There are many of every age and of both sexes--nor has the contagion of this superstition seized cities only, but smaller towns also, and the open country.”

(x.96) see ISBE –Rome and the Christians

*“Since I have begun to deal with this problem, the charges have become more common and are increasing in variety, as often happens. An anonymous accusatory pamphlet has been circulated containing the names of many people. I decided to dismiss any who denied that they are or ever have been **Christians** when they repeated after me a formula invoking the gods and made offerings of wine and incense to your image, which I had ordered to be brought with the images of the gods into court for this reason, and when they **reviled Christ** (*Christo male dicere*). I understand that no one who is really a **Christian** can be made to do these things.*

*Other people, whose names were given to me by an informer, first said that they were **Christians** and then denied it. They said that they had stopped being **Christians** two or more years ago, and some more than twenty. They all venerated your image and the images of the gods as the others did, and reviled **Christ**. They also maintained that the sum total of their guilt or error was no more than the following. **They had met regularly before dawn on a determined day, and sung antiphonally a hymn to Christ as if to a god** (*carmenque Christo quasi deo dicere secum invicem*). **They also took an oath not for any crime, but to keep from theft, robbery and adultery, not to break any promise, and not to withhold a deposit when reclaimed.***

It seems clear that Christianity was not some second-century illusion. Indeed, by this time a law against Christianity had already been passed. (x.97)

The arguments often made against the historicity of Jesus are such that if there were no inconsistencies in the Gospel, that itself would be used against it.

- E. Lucian of Samosata [115-200] mocked the followers of Christianity and said Christ was crucified in Palestine.

The Death of Peregrinus, written shortly after 165 A.D.

(§11) *“During this period [Peregrinus] associated himself with the priests and scribes of the Christians in Palestine, and learned their astonishing wisdom. Of course, in a short time he made them look like children; he was their prophet, leader, head of the synagogue, and everything, all by himself. He explained and commented on some of their sacred writings, and even wrote some himself. They looked up to him as a god, made him their lawgiver, and chose him as the official patron of their group, or at least the vice-patron. He was second only to that one whom they still worship today, **the man in Palestine who was crucified** because he brought this new form of initiation into the world”*

Peregrinus was jailed and Christians came to his aid, bringing meals and money. Then Lucian explains why they did this:

*“Having convinced themselves that they are immortal and will live forever, the poor wretches despise death and most willingly give themselves to it. Moreover, that first lawgiver of theirs persuaded them that they are all brothers the moment they transgress and deny the Greek gods and begin worshipping that **crucified** sophist and living by his laws.”*

F. **Mara bar Serapion:** [sometime after 73 AD perhaps after the second revolt in 132 AD]

*What else can we say, when the wise are forcibly dragged off by tyrants, their wisdom is captured by insults, and their minds are oppressed and without defense! What advantage did the Athenians gain by murdering Socrates, for which they were repaid with famine and pestilence? Or the people of Samos by the burning of Pythagoras, because their country was completely covered in sand in just one hour! **Or the Jews [by killing]” their wise king, because their kingdom was taken away at that very time?** God justly repaid the wisdom of these three men: the Athenians died of famine; the Samians were completely overwhelmed by the sea; **and the Jews, desolate and driven from their own kingdom, are scattered through every nation.** Socrates is not dead, because of Plato; neither is Pythagoras, because of the statue of Juno; nor is **the wise king**, because of the new laws he laid down.*

-The Jesus of the New Testament, Robert E Van Voorst

-Jesus & Christian Origins Outside the New Testament, by F. F. Bruce p.31

G. In ancient disputes with those who opposed Christianity, Christians referred their opponents to external source records. This would only have been done if they believed such records existed.

Justin Martyr [around 150 AD] First Apology, 35 refers to documents in the Roman archives, Chapter 35.

*“They pierced my hands and my feet,” was used in reference to the nails of the cross which were fixed in His hands and feet. And after He was crucified they cast lots upon His vesture, and they that crucified Him parted it among them. **And that these things did happen, you can ascertain from the Acts of Pontius Pilate.***

Chapter 48 *And that He did those things, you can learn from the **Acts of Pontius Pilate.***

Chapter 34. *Now there is a village in the land of the Jews, thirty-five stadia from Jerusalem, in which Jesus Christ was born, as you can **ascertain also from the registers of the taxing made under Cyrenius, your first procurator in Judaea.***

Tertullian [AD 145-220], Against Marcion 4:7, 19, Apology 5, 21, 34

Part 2, Against Marcion: 4:7.

*And yet how could He have been admitted into the synagogue — one so abruptly appearing, so unknown; one, of whom no one had as yet been apprised of His tribe, His nation, His family, and lastly, **His enrollment in the census of Augustus** — that most faithful witness of the Lord’s nativity, kept in the archives of Rome?*

Part 2, Against Marcion: 4:19.

*But there is **historical proof that at this very time a census had been taken in Judaea** by Sentius Saturninus, which might have satisfied their inquiry respecting the family and descent of Christ. Such a method of testing the point had therefore no consistency whatever in it and they “who were standing without” were really “His mother and His brethren.”*

Part 1, 1st Apology 5.

*Tiberius accordingly, in whose days the Christian name made its entry into the world, having himself received intelligence from Palestine of events which had clearly shown the truth of Christ's divinity, brought the matter before the senate, with his own decision in favor of Christ. The senate, because it had not given the approval itself, rejected his proposal. Caesar held to his opinion, threatening wrath against all accusers of the Christians. **Consult your histories**; you will there find that Nero was the first who assailed with the imperial sword the Christian sect, making progress then especially at Rome.*

Part 1, 1st Apology 21.

*Those who were not aware that this had been predicted about Christ, no doubt thought it an eclipse. **You yourselves have the account of the world-portent still in your archives.***

Part 1, 7 “Answer to the Jews” Chapter 9:

*For He was from the native soil of Bethlehem, and from the house of David; as, among the Romans, Mary is **described in the census**, of whom is born Christ.*

H. Jewish sources, in speaking against Christianity, recognize Jesus as a real person

1. Rabbi Johanan Ben Zakki, 66 AD to 70 AD in the Mishna
“*the written **Gospels** of the heretical sect called Christians*”

(Showing the Gospels about Jesus must have been written by that time.)

2. Talmud

*It is taught that Rabbi Eliezer said to the Wise, “Did not **Ben Stada** bring spells from Egypt in a cut in his flesh!” They said to him, “He was a fool, and they do not bring evidence from a fool.” **Ben Stada is Ben Pantera**. Rabbi Hisda [d. 309] said, “The husband was Stada, the lover was **Pantera**.” The husband was [actually] Pappos ben Judah, the mother was Stada. The mother was **Miriam [Mary]** the dresser of women's hair. As we say in Pumbeditha, “She has been false to [satath da] her husband.” (b. Shabbat 104b)*

[“Ben Pantera is reasonably identified with Jesus. In the Talmud, this name occurs in conjunction with Ben Stada in *b Shabbat* 104b and its parallel passage in *b. Sanhedrin* 64a. We have independent testimony from Celsus around 180 that the Jews were telling stories about Mary's conception of Jesus by a Roman soldier named Panthera. (Origen, Against Celsus 1.32) “Panthera” is likely derived from the Greek ‘parthenos’ (‘virgin’) because Christians claimed Jesus was born of a virgin.” –Van Vorst]

It is taught about the rest of all who are worthy of death according to the Torah, that they do not use concealment against them, except in this case [of the apostate deceiver]. How do they deal with him? They light a lamp for him in the inner room

and set witnesses in the outer room, so that they can see him and hear his voice, but he cannot see them. Someone [in the inner room] says to him, "Tell me again what you said to me in private." Another says to him, "How shall we forsake our God in heaven, and practice false worship!" If he repents, all is well. If he says, "It is our duty [to forsake God]," the witnesses who hear from outside [in the other room] bring him to the Beth Din and stone him. Thus they did to **Ben Stada** in Lud [Lydda], and **they hanged him on the day before the Passover**. (b. Sanhedrin 67)

When King Jannaeus [d. 76 B.C.E.] was killing our rabbis, Rabbi Joshua ben Perahiah and **Jesus** escaped to Alexandria, Egypt. When peace was restored...he set off (for home), and came to a certain inn, where he was given a warm welcome. He said, "How lovely is this aksania (inn, innkeeper)!" He [Jesus] replied, "Rabbi, she has narrow eyes." Rabbi Joshua said, "You villain, is that what you are thinking about?" So he sounded four hundred trumpets and excommunicated him. Many times **Jesus** came and pleaded to be allowed back, but he would not listen. But one day, when Rabbi Joshua was reciting the Shema, **Jesus** approached him. Deciding to welcome him back, he made a gesture to him. However, **Jesus** thought he was ordering him to leave, and he went and set up a brick and worshiped it. "Repent:" he [Rabbi Joshua] told him, but he answered, "I have learned from you that no chance of repentance is given to one who sins and leads others into sin." And a teacher has said, "**Jesus the Nazarene** practiced magic and **led Israel astray**."... Our rabbis taught: Let the left hand push away, but the right hand always invite back, not like Elisha who pushed Gehazi away with both hands, and not like Joshua ben Perahiah who pushed **Jesus** away with both hands. (b. Sanhedrin 107b; cf. b. Sotah 47a)

Jesus mother is also attacked:

Rabbi Yohanan said [about Balaam], "In the beginning a prophet, in the end a diviner." Rabbi Papa [fourth century] said, "This is what they say: She was the descendant of princes and governors, but played the harlot with carpenters." (b. Sanhedrin 106a)

Rabbi Bibi bar Abaji [d. fourth century] told this story [about someone who died prematurely]. The angel of death was with him. The angel said to his [angelic] messenger, "Go, bring me **Miriam** the women's hairdresser!" He went but brought Miriam the teacher of children. [The angel of death] said to him, "I told you **Miriam** [Mary] the women's hairdresser!" He said, "I will take this one back." [The angel of death] said, "Since you have brought this one, let her be among the number [of the dead]." (b. Hagigah 4b)

Jesus practiced magic and **led Israel astray**. (b. Sanhedrin 43a; cf. t. Shabbat 11.15; b. Shabbat 104b)

Rabbi Hisda [d. 309] said that Rabbi Jeremiah bar Abba said, "What is that which is written, 'No evil will befall you, nor shall any plague come near your house'? IPs 91:10]....'No evil will befall you [means] that evil dreams and evil thoughts will not

*tempt you; 'nor shall any plague come near your house' [means] that you will not have a son or a disciple who burns his food like **Jesus of Nazareth**. (b. Sanhedrin 103a; cf. b. Berakhot 17b)*

*Our rabbis have taught that **Jesus had five disciples: Matthai, Nakai, Neter, Buni, and Todah**. They brought **Matthai** [to trial]. He said, "Must Matthai be killed! For it is written, 'When [mathai] shall I come and appear before God!'" (Ps 92:2). They said to him, "Yes, Matthai must be killed, for it is written, 'When [mathai] he dies his name will perish'" [Ps 41:5]. They brought Nakai. He said to them, "Must Nakai be killed! For it is written, 'The innocent [naqij and the righteous you will not slay'" [Exod 23:73]. They said to him, "Yes, Nakai must be killed, for it is written, 'In secret places he slays the innocent [naqi]" [Ps 10:8]. (b. Sanhedrin 43a; the passage continues similarly for Neter, Buni, and Todah)*

*It was taught: **On the day before the Passover they hanged Jesus**. A herald went before him for forty days [proclaiming], "He will be stoned, because he practiced magic and enticed Israel to go astray. Let anyone who knows anything in his favor come forward and plead for him! But nothing was found in his favor, **and they hanged him on the day before the Passover**. (b. Sanhedrin 43a)*

IV. Early Christian non-canonical documents.

There are a number of early Christian documents that claim to be teachings about Christ. These are often used to argue for either a mythical Christ or of a view of Christ and the nature of early Christianity substantially different from that represented in the Gospels.

The claim is that the Gospels were written after the fall of Jerusalem (often in the second century) and by that time Christianity had completely evolved. It is maintained that before the Gospels were compiled, there were just lists of sayings attributed to Christ. Mark, brought these together into a story in which he added details of his life in a sort of coded set of "mysteries," which being admitted, the converts were then revealed the meanings.

A. Hypothetical "Q"

"Q" is only a hypothetical document. Broadly defined, it is what is found in both Matthew and Luke, that is not found in Mark.

The reasoning is based on the priority of Mark (that it was written first) and that while much found in Matthew and Luke came from Mark, there is much that is contained in both Matthew and Luke that was not obtained from Mark, and therefore there must have been another source common to both Matthew and Luke. This source is called "Q."

One problem raised by this is that Matthew then was not relying on information from his own relationship with Jesus. He would then seem then not be relying on the Holy Spirit to bring all things to his remembrance, as promised by Jesus (John 14:26). How could he be quoting from Mark who himself had never been with Jesus? This then raises

questions as to whether Matthew was even the author of the book as affirmed by the early Fathers.

Our objection to the hypothesis is not that the Gospel writers could not have used any other sources in writing their books. Both Mark and Luke certainly seem to have done so. Luke says that he those who were eyewitnesses delivered information to him (Luke 1:2). Even Matthew had to get his information about the genealogy and early events of his birth from some source. The major objections are to problems in the theory, the arbitrary and inconsistent decisions and the unwarranted and excessive distortions of the scriptural account by the major proponents.

The picture of Q often presented is that it is mostly just sayings attributed to Jesus, giving nothing of his birth or early life nor of many of his activities and death. Those things are supposed to have been added at a later date onto an earlier mythical concept.

There are many problems with the theory, and the existence and nature of such a document is in dispute.

1. In the first place, the whole thing is purely hypothetical. If Luke relied upon Matthew and Mark, "Q" simply disappears. Thus, the concept primarily relies on Luke not being aware of what Matthew wrote.

I would emphasize that we are not so concerned about whether there was a "Q" document that predated Matthew and Luke, but what this has been construed to be and the unwarranted destructive suppositions against the Gospel records. The fact is that even hypothetical "Q" represents Jesus as a real person, though many of the details of his life are arbitrarily omitted by the reconstructionists.

2. Thus, we object to the totally arbitrary to claim that if something is in all three Gospels it cannot be in "Q." Since the rules for deciding what is in "Q" comes from are purely presumptive and arbitrary there is simply no way to know that hypothetical "Q" did not contain things found also in Mark. Thus the exclusion of things found in Mark is utterly foundationless. Indeed, it is highly suspect of being shaped by the liberal theological propensity to degrade Scriptural values.

Against such a bias stands the fact that the crucifixion is the focal point of importance throughout all Christian literature. If such a document did exist it would have the highest likelihood of containing the same focus as we find in all three Gospels and other Christian documents. It would be incredibly unlikely that the crucifixion story was unknown and concocted later, and even sold to the outside world as a historical fact.

The very fact that all four Gospels contained accounts of the resurrection indicates its importance, rather than that they were omitted by "Q." Things considered of special importance would be more likely included. Things of lesser importance to the writer's objectives would be more likely omitted.

In fact, the hypothetical “Q” passages did not exclude all references to the passion of Jesus.

Mat 12:40 Jesus prophesied his death and resurrection after three days “*as Jonah was in the belly of the whale...*”

Mat 10:38 & Luke 14:27. “*Take up your cross and follow me*”

Luke 17:24-25. Verse 25 speaks of Christ’s suffering and rejection by that generation.

3. Again, in comparing the various writers supporting the theory, I find them greatly divided and inconsistent as to what hypothetical “Q” should contain. They agree on a general concept but in fact do not hold to it.

For example, while hypothetical “Q” is supposedly what is not contained in Mark, in fact statements found in all three Gospels are included by the proponents of “Q.”

Marcus Borg includes Mat 3:3 and Luke 3:4, which is also paralleled in Mark 1:2-3

Borg, Kummel and Mack all include Mat 3:11-12 and Luke 3:16-17 which is paralleled in Mark 1:7-8.

Borg and Kummel include Mat. 3:16-17 and Luke 3:21-22, which is paralleled in Mark 1:9-11.

Borg, Kummel and Mack all include Mat. 4:1-2 and Luke 4:1-2 which is paralleled in Mark 1:12-13.

Kummel includes Mat 10:1-8 and Luke 6:13-16, which is paralleled in Mark 3:13-19.

Borg, Kummel and Mack include Mat 10:9-10 and Luke 9:3; 10:4, which is paralleled in Mark 6.

Borg, Kummel and Mack include Mat 12:22-28 and Luke 11:14-20, which is paralleled in Mark 3:22-27.

Kummel and Mack include Matthew 12:29 and Luke 11:21 which is paralleled in Mark 3.

Borg, Kummel and Mack include Mat. 5:15 and Luke 11:33 which is paralleled in Mark 4:21.

Borg, Kummel and Mack include Mat 13:31-32, and Luke 13:18-19 which is paralleled in Mark 4:30-32.

There are others. If these can be included then upon what consistent basis can the accounts of the Passion of Jesus be excluded?

4. Another inconsistency is the many passages they include in “Q,” which are found only in Matthew or (mostly) in Luke.

The reason for this is that parts of the narrative are found in both Matthew and Luke and attempting to exclude the portions found only in Luke would create textual problems. For example, Luke 12 has some things that parallel those in Matthew. The proponents of “Q” split on what should be included and what omitted.

Furthermore, just because something would not create a textual difficulty does not indicate that it was not there. To escape these inconsistencies it is suggested that “Q” was compiled in “layers” in which Matthew may not have seen all of the same things as Luke.

Again this theory is questioned and the complexity and inconsistencies continue to mount. Clearly there is a great deal of arbitrary judgment which renders the whole concept open to serious question, unacceptable to believers.

B. The “Gospel of Thomas”

“The Gospel of Thomas is a collection of traditional Sayings (*logoi*) of Jesus. It is attributed to Didymos Judas Thomas, the “Doubting Thomas” of the canonical Gospels, and according to many early traditions, the twin brother of Jesus (“didymos” means “twin” in Greek).

“We have two versions of the Gospel of Thomas today. The first was discovered in the late 1800’s among the *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, and consists of fragments of a Greek version, which has been dated to c. 200. The second is a complete version, in Coptic, from Codex II of the Nag Hammadi finds.”

-Gospel of Thomas, Craig Schenk

The document consists of 114 sayings in no particular order. Some have claimed that these indicate that the earliest view of Jesus was only lists of sayings which were later formed into an account of him as a person. While this is a list of sayings, it utterly fails to substantiate the claim. The document seems to be a later Gnostic list, which includes many quotations from the Gospels.

1. To begin with, it certainly does not represent Jesus as Mythical. The sayings clearly represent Jesus as a real person.

Jesus is represented as being born and having a mother named Mary. (79, 99, 101, 114)

(79) A woman from the crowd said to Him, “Blessed are the womb which bore You and the breasts which nourished You.” He said to her, “Blessed are those who have heard the word of the Father and have truly kept it. For there will be days when you will say, ‘Blessed are the womb which has not conceived and the breasts which have not given milk.’”

Mary is represented as speaking to him about his disciples (21)

He has disciples with whom he discusses (13, 18, 20, 22, 24, 37, 43, 51, 52, 53, 60)

Jesus is represented as having come in the flesh (28)

2. It has many quotations and citations of the Gospels. I supply only a few.

(20) The disciples said to Jesus, “Tell us what the Kingdom of Heaven is like.” He said to them, “It is like a mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds. But when it falls on tilled soil, it produces a great plant and becomes a shelter for birds of the sky.”

(26) Jesus said, “You see the mote in your brothers eye, but you do not see the beam in your own eye. When you cast the beam out of your own eye, then you will see clearly to cast the mote from your brother’s eye.”

(44) Jesus said, “Whoever blasphemes against the Father will be forgiven, and whoever blasphemes against the Son will be forgiven, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven either on earth or in heaven.”

(72) [A man said] to Him], “Tell my brothers to divide my father’s possessions with me.” He said to him, “O man, who has made Me a divider?” He turned to His disciples and said to them, “I am not a divider, am I?”

(73) Jesus said, “The harvest is great but the laborers are few. Beseech the Lord, therefore, to send out laborers to the harvest.”

(86) Jesus said, “[The foxes have their holes] and the birds have [their] nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head and rest.”

(99) The disciples said to Him, “Your brothers and Your mother are standing outside.” He said to them, “Those here who do the will of My Father are My brothers and My mother. It is they who will enter the Kingdom of My Father.”

(100) They showed Jesus a gold coin and said to Him, “Caesar’s men demand taxes from us.” He said to them, “Give Caesar what belongs to Caesar, give God what belongs to God, and give Me what is Mine.”

3. It has some serious distortions of Christianity inconsistent with the Gospels, which indicate Gnostic or pagan sources.

(114) Simon Peter said to Him, “Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of Life.” Jesus said, “I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”

C. Secret Gospel of Mark

The “*Secret Gospel of Mark*” is found in a supposed letter of Clement of Alexandria to Theodore. Clement says that Mark not only wrote the Gospel we have, but another version which contained secret or unrevealed information, of which he says of Corporates, “*he both interpreted according to his blasphemous and carnal doctrine and, moreover, polluted, mixing with the spotless and holy words utterly shameless lies. From this mixture is drawn off the teaching of the Carpocratians.*”

There are serious questions about this document. In the first place, it has disappeared and therefore cannot be examined for authentication.

Secondly, there are some concepts in it that seem inconsistent with what Clement, as a Christian, would have advised.

“To them, therefore, as I said above, one must never give way; nor, when they put forward their falsifications, should one concede that the secret Gospel is by Mark, but should even deny it on oath.”

Thirdly, the document itself is small and contains only a paragraph of the supposed “Secret Gospel.” Thus, speculation about the nature of the rest of it is of no value.

The quotation from the “Secret Gospel” does not even fit as Clement supposedly represents it. I here give a copy of it compared with what the book of Mark said.

Clement:

“To you, therefore, I shall not hesitate to answer the questions you have asked, refuting the falsifications by the very words of the Gospel. For example, after, “And they were in the road going up to Jerusalem,” and what follows, until “After three days he shall arise,” the secret Gospel brings the following material word for word:

<p>Mark: 10:32 <i>And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem;</i></p>	<p>Clement: <i>”And they were in the road going up to Jerusalem</i></p>
<p><i>and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him,</i></p>	<p><i>“And they come into Bethany. And a certain woman whose brother had died was there. And, coming, she prostrated herself before Jesus and says to him, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me.’</i></p>
<p><i>33 Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles:</i></p>	<p><i>But the disciples rebuked her. And Jesus, being angered, went off with her into the garden where the tomb was, and straightway a great cry was heard from the tomb. And going near</i></p>
<p><i>34 And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him,</i></p>	<p><i>Jesus rolled away the stone from the door of</i></p>

<i>and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him:</i>	<i>the tomb. And straightway, going in where the youth was, he stretched forth his hand and raised him, seizing his hand. But the youth, looking upon him, loved him and began to beseech him that he might be with him. And going out of the tomb they came into the house of the youth, for he was rich. And after six days Jesus told him what to do and in the evening the youth comes to him, wearing a linen cloth over his naked body. And he remained with him that night, for Jesus taught him the mystery of the kingdom of God. And thence, arising, he returned to the other side of the Jordan.”</i>
<i>(34b). and the third day he shall rise again.</i>	<i>“After three days he shall arise,”</i>
<i>35 And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him,...</i>	<i>And James and John come to him</i>
<i>46 And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging.</i>	<i>“And he comes into Jericho,</i>

Clement continues: “After these words follows the text, ‘And James and John come to him,’ and all that section. But “naked man with naked man,” and the other things about which you wrote, are not found.

And after the words, ‘And he comes into Jericho,’ the secret Gospel adds only, ‘And the sister of the youth whom Jesus loved and his mother and Salome were there, and Jesus did not receive them.’

“But the many other things about which you wrote both seem to be and are falsifications. Now the true explanation and that which accords with the true philosophy...”

[Here the text abruptly stops in the middle of the page]

Thus, the statement will not fit as claimed because the statements of Jesus are omitted and only a disconnected phrase “After three days he shall arise,” immediately follows the insertion. This makes no sense.

Furthermore, it represents Jesus as going up from Jordan (Mark 10:1) to Jerusalem through Bethany. However, Bethany is not on the road to Jerusalem. Bethany is Southeast of Jerusalem.

This problem is further compounded by the paragraph itself which says that afterwards, instead of going to Jerusalem, “he returned to the other side of Jordan”, whereas Mark (10:46) says they “came to Jericho.” Secret Mark represents his going to Jericho after returning to Jordan.

Again, the representation of Jesus being angered at the disciples for rebuking the woman and then abruptly going off into the garden where the tomb was, with no reproof of the apostles, seems out of character. In Mark 10:13-14 where Jesus was displeased that they

forbade the children to come to Jesus, he simply corrects them. Here, the reference to his anger at the Pharisees (Mark 2:5) seems to be woven into the story to provide some validation, as with other things in the account from other areas.

Again, it seems strange that the youth is raised from the dead and cries out before Jesus rolls away the stone, but lays there until he enters and extends his hand to him. Jesus then stays with him six days before telling him what to do and then the youth comes to him in the evening wearing a linen cloth over his naked body and remains with him over night, and Jesus tells him the "*mystery of the kingdom of God.*"

Finally, the representation of him coming to Jericho and the sister and mother of the youth being there but Jesus did not receive them, again sounds out of character to the Jesus of mark.

The document appears to be a very garbled attempt to represent the story of Lazarus as of Markan origin under the guise of the authority of Clement. In fact it is very suspect as someone having taken Greek phrases from other places and put them together to make them appear ancient.

In any case, it is clear that this document represents Jesus as a real person.

- V. Attempts to show that the original concept of Jesus was mythical are utterly without substantiation.

This is commonly done by citing various mythical sources having some similarities.

- A. The claim that Jesus was represented as a god with the head of a donkey which suggests that the Christians beliefs about Christ were similar to those of pagan deities.

Minucius Felix, an obscure "father" records a dispute between a Pagan named, Caecilius, and a Christian named Octavius. Caecilius makes accusations that the Christians worshipped a crucified criminal, that they worshipped an ass-headed God, that they worshipped the cross upon which he hung, and that they drank the blood of their Children.

"CHAPTER 9 (Caecilius, the pagan in dispute with Octavius)

ARGUMENT: the religion of the Christians is foolish, inasmuch as they worship a crucified man, and even the instrument itself of his punishment. They are said to worship the head of an ass, and even the nature of their father. They are initiated by the slaughter and the blood of an infant, and in shameless darkness they are all mixed up in an uncertain medley."

Response of Octavius:

CHAPTER 29

ARGUMENT: *nor is it more true that a man fastened to a cross on account of his crimes is worshipped by Christians, for they believe not only that he was innocent, but with reason that he was God.*

CHAPTER 30

ARGUMENT: *the story about Christians drinking the blood of an infant that they have murdered, is a barefaced calumny.*

Felix does not deny Jesus was fastened to a cross. Rather, he upholds the sign of the cross. He denies that Jesus was a criminal and that Christians worship a cross. He denies that Jesus was just a mortal man. Rather, he acknowledges him as God.

He states:

“For in that you attribute to our religion the worship of a criminal and his cross, you wander far from the neighborhood of the truth, in thinking either that a criminal deserved, or that an earthly being was able, to be believed God. Miserable indeed is that man whose whole hope is dependent on mortal man, for all his help is put an end to with the extinction of the man.”

B. Citations of mythical Gods dying, crucified and being raised, born of virgins

Some have cited Doioysus and Attis as also being born, killed and resurrected, and having some relation to a tree. However there is almost nothing similar to the birth, death and resurrection of Christ.

Dionysus was the Pagan God of wine, Bacchas. The mysteries of Dionysus are wholly inhuman; for while still a child, and the Curetes danced around [his cradle] clashing their weapons, and the Titans having come upon them by stealth, and having beguiled him with childish toys, these very Titans tore him limb from limb when but a child. He angered the Titans and they tore him in pieces (not nailed him to a cross) and later he came back from the dead.

Attis mutilated himself and died, continuing to be represented by the Pine tree.

How much are these similar to Christ's crucifixion on the cross?

C. Claims that story of Jesus was created to fit the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament.

Of course, this is a direct assault on the basic Christian prophetic evidential concept of Jesus as the Messiah. It attacks the features of prophetic fulfillment as being no more than a contrived “fulfillment” to fit.

The problem with this is that, in the absence of evidence, it is nothing but empty speculation, and most of all, it cannot override the evidence of Jesus as a historical

person. Indeed, it would be more likely that the attempt was to make a real person meet the specifics.

D. Claims that the story of Jesus and Lazarus was an adaptation of an Egyptian myth.

Here is how one writer puts the argument:

“In the Egyptian myth, the god-king Osiris has two sisters. He dies and is buried in the city Annu. Horus raises him from the dead. In the Lazarus story, he also has two sisters and is raised from the dead but his story centers in Bethany. "Annu" in Greek is "the City of the Sun". Semitized, it becomes Beth-Shemesh (Jer 43:13). If "House of Anu", another name for the place, were Semitized from the Greek, it would become Beth-Anu (Bethanu). Coincidence? Alone, perhaps, but there are more similarities. Osiris' name is not far removed from Lazarus if we translate it into Hebrew:

“ El-Osiris ("El" is "god")/El-azar (Hebrew for "God Helps")

“Comparison of specifically worded passages reveals more parallels including the strange mention of possible smells to be found within the resting place of either corpse.”

Such claims are grossly conjectural and the parallels far remote from the account given in the New Testament.

E. Attempts to show that the Gospels conflict with each other and therefore cannot be regarded as reliable records.

Anyone who has done any extensive reading of history or tries to write it will quickly realize that conveying such information in a way that it can be understood by all without seeming conflicts is very difficult. This is greatly compounded over time by copying and especially when translated into other languages. That does not make the documents worthless nor does it indicate the event did not happen or the event did not take place, else we would have little or no basis to believe that anyone in history existed.

Conclusion:

Thus, we have shown considerable evidence, supporting Jesus as a real historical person, both from the perspective of Christians and from external sources.

In contrast to that, the advocates of a “mythical Jesus” have provided nothing of substance supporting their claim.