

Jesus, pt. 1

Myths and Facts, #4

Understanding
Christianity



MYTH: "Jesus Christ might never have existed."

FACT: *"Nearly all historians, whether Christians or not, accept that Jesus existed...There is general agreement that, with the possible exception of Paul, we know far more about Jesus of Nazareth than about any first or second century religious teacher."* (Graham Stanton, New Testament Studies President at Cambridge University)

MYTH: "The Bible only says that Jesus was a man- not God."

FACTS: It teaches plainly that Jesus was both God and man. He is even directly called "God" (*theos*) several times in multiple scripture books.

"...the deity [godhood] and incarnation of Jesus are unequivocally proclaimed...the open declaration of deity in the first verse of the Gospel [of John] demonstrates clearly that the author was in no way embarrassed by the full divinity of Christ." (Maurice Casey, non-Christian and New Testament scholar, University of Nottingham)

"New Testament titles of Jesus such as "Son of God", "Lord" or "Alpha and Omega," imply the divinity of Jesus, but the title 'God' explicitly affirms his deity." (Murray Harris, professor of New Testament exegesis, warden of Tyndale House at the University of Cambridge)

MYTH: "Jesus' followers may have thought that He was God, but Jesus himself didn't."

FACTS: All the available information about Jesus confirms that He taught

that He was the Son of God and shared the same nature as God:

"Jesus claimed to be God's equal... Jesus understands himself to be the object of the religious devotion that is only due God...he identifies his own presence and his own activities with the rule of God." (Prof. Sigurd Grindheim: *God's Equal: What Can We Know About Jesus' Self-Understanding?*, Library of New Testament Studies)

MYTH: "The doctrine that Jesus was God started at the Council of Nicea in AD 325."

FACTS: The idea that Jesus *wasn't* God first arose in the 3rd century. Christ's divinity was understood by Christians since the very beginning. (*Council of Nicaea* in Encyclopedia Britannica)

"In pretty much the entire body of early Christian writings from the first three centuries, Jesus' divinity is taken for granted. At the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325, the crucial question was how to reconcile Jesus' divinity with Christian monotheism."

(Larry Hurtado, Emeritus Prof. of New Testament Language and Literature and head of the Centre for the Study of Christian Origins at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland)

"The ascription of the title 'God' to Jesus is found in four New Testament writers...use of the title began immediately after the resurrection, continued during the 50's and 60's, and then into the 90's. The use of 'God' in reference to Jesus was not restricted to Christians who lived in one region or who had a particular theological outlook." (Harris: *Three Crucial Questions About Jesus*, Baker Academic Press)

MYTH: "Jesus traveled and studied Eastern religion."

FACTS: The myths about Jesus traveling to foreign lands began with Nicolas Notovitch, a Russian of the late 1800's, who claimed to have traveled to India and seen documents about Jesus' travels there. The documents proved to be non-existent and there is no evidence or even a hint of Jesus ever having left Israel. However, the myth spread like wildfire among followers of the new-age movement:

"Today there is not a single recognized scholar on the planet who has any doubts about the matter. The entire story was invented by Notovitch, who earned a good deal of money and a substantial amount of notoriety for his hoax." (Bart Ehrman, atheist and noted New Testament scholar, Distinguished Professor of Religion, UNC)

MYTH: "Jesus was married (perhaps to Mary Magdalene) and/or had children."

FACTS: There is no hint in any ancient writing that Jesus was married to anyone. The Biblical books portray him as single (Mt. 19:10-12, 1 Co. 9:5), and so do the gnostic gospels and other later writings about Jesus.

"There is no reference to Jesus and Mary being married in any Christian (or non-Christian) writing of any kind from the ancient world." (Bart Ehrman: *Scholarly Smackdown*, 2006)

MYTH: "Israeli men in Jesus' time- especially rabbis- were expected to be married. Jesus was called a rabbi. Therefore Jesus would have been married."

FACTS: *"Jesus was not technically a rabbi, nor did he portray himself as one. The apostles addressed him as such to say he was their teacher, not because he held the official Jewish office."* (Dr. Darrell Bock, renowned New Testament scholar/research professor)

"In fact, we have solid evidence that some Jewish men chose to remain unmarried, and that leading Jewish thinkers praised them for this choice." (Mark D. Roberts, Doctor of Religion-New Testament and Christian Origins, Harvard: *Was Jesus Married? A Careful Look at the Real Evidence*)

Though marriage was the standard in scripture and Jewish culture, many with a high spiritual calling chose to remain celibate to dedicate their lives to God and ministry- including many Old Testament Biblical prophets, Paul, and Jesus.

MYTH: "Jesus was White/Black/Arabic/etc."

FACT: It is universally understood by historians that Jesus was Jewish. Beyond that, nothing is known of his appearance. (Emily-Jill Devine, *The Historical Jesus in Context*, Princeton Univ. Press)

The Biblical narrative in general ignores physical appearances and race, and teaches that both are inconsequential. (Acts 17:26, Gal. 3:28, Isaiah 53:2)

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