

**So...if Jesus Didn't
Exist, Where Did He
Come from Then?**



Richard Carrier, Ph.D

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Three Horses in the Race

Christian Historicity	Secular Historicity	Secular Non-Historicity
<p>Jesus was an amazingly famous superman who could walk on water and shit.</p>	<p>Jesus was an ordinary nobody, whom no one noticed but a few fanatical followers.</p>	<p>Jesus was the name of a celestial being, subordinate to God, with whom some people hallucinated conversations.</p>
<p>The Gospels are the straight dope!</p>	<p>On Jesus, Gospels are mostly fiction but there are kernels of truth in them.</p>	<p>The Gospel began as a mythic allegory about the celestial Jesus, set on earth, as most myths then were.</p>

Three Horses in the Race

Forget All Other Mythicist Theories

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Jesus was an amazingly famous superman who could walk on water and shit.	Jesus was an ordinary nobody, whom no one noticed but a few fanatical followers.	Jesus was the name of a celestial being, subordinate to God, with whom some people hallucinated conversations.
The Gospels are the straight dope!	On Jesus, Gospels are mostly fiction but there are kernels of truth in them.	The Gospel began as a mythic allegory about the celestial Jesus, set on earth, as most myths then were.

The Divine Analogy

- ❖ **Islam:** Mohammed “hallucinates” conversations with the angel Gabriel and the Koran records the spoken teachings of Gabriel.
- ❖ **Mormonism:** Joseph Smith “hallucinates” conversations with the angel Moroni and seeing words on magical plates, and the Book of Mormon records what the latter two said.

The Divine Analogy

- ❖ **Islam:** Mohammed “hallucinates”
conversations with the angel Gabriel and the
Koran received from the angel Gabriel.
- ❖ **Mormonism:** Joseph Smith “hallucinates”
conversations with the angel Moroni and seeing
words on a golden tablet.
Mormon records what the latter two said.

**Jesus was originally a
celestial being like Gabriel
or Moroni, and taught his
followers in the same way.**

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conversations with the angel Moroni and seeing
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Mormon records what the latter two said.

Then he was
“**Euhemerized**” (*stories
were created that placed
him on earth interacting
with historical figures*)

The Divine Analogy

- ❖ **Islam:** Muhammad had a conversation with the angel Gabriel and the Koran records what he said.
- ❖ **Mormonism:** Joseph Smith had a conversation with the angel Moroni and seeing the words on the golden plates. Mormon records what the latter two said.

Then people started believing or selling those stories as true.

Why Is That Credible?

Trends in Hellenistic Religion

- ❖ Petra Pakkanen, *Interpreting Early Hellenistic Religion* (1996)
- ❖ Four big trends in religion in the centuries leading up to Christianity
- ❖ Christianity conforms to all four

The Four Trends

- ❖ **Syncretism:** combining a foreign cult deity with Hellenistic elements.
- ❖ **Monotheism:** transforming polytheism into monotheism (via henotheism).
- ❖ **Individualism:** agricultural salvation cults retooled as personal salvation cults.
- ❖ **Cosmopolitanism:** all races, cultures, classes admitted as equals, with fictive kinship (members are all “brothers”); you now “join” a religion rather than being born into it.

The Trend in Action

The Trend in Action

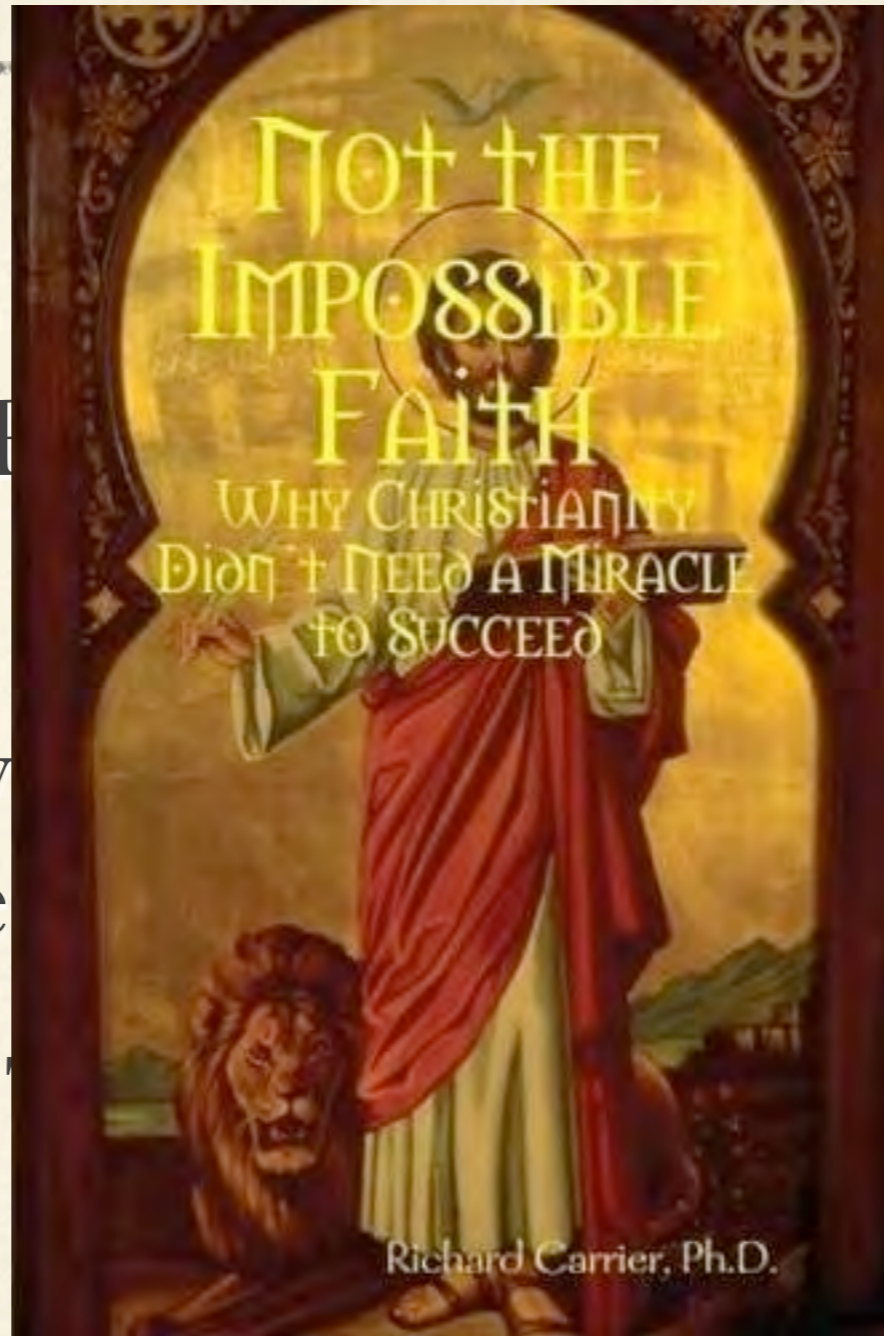
Eleusinian & Dionysian Mysteries	Combined Hellenistic elements with Phoenician (Western Syria).
Mysteries of Attis & Cybele	Combined Hellenistic elements with Phrygian (Northern Turkey).
Mysteries of Jupiter Dolichenus	Combined Hellenistic elements with Anatolian (Western Turkey).
Mysteries of Mithras (Mithraism)	Combined Hellenistic elements with Persian (Iran).
Mysteries of Isis & Osiris	Combined Hellenistic elements with Egyptian .
Christianity	Combined Hellenistic elements with Jewish (Israel / Palestine).

Dying-and-Rising Gods

- ❖ **Romulus:** Roman state god, his death and resurrection celebrated in annual plays.
- ❖ **Osiris:** Egyptian god, those baptized into his death and resurrection are saved in the afterlife.
- ❖ **Zalmoxis:** Thracian god, his death and resurrection assures followers of eternal life.

Dying-and-Rising Gods

- ❖ **Romulus:** Roman god of war, death and resurrection
- ❖ **Osiris:** Egyptian god of death and resurrection
- ❖ **Zalmoxis:** Dacian god of death and resurrection



...s death and
...l plays.

...otized into his
...in the afterlife.

...eath and
...eternal life.



But Mithra is *Not* a
Dying-and-Rising God

All These Gods *Do* Have in Common...

- They are all “savior gods”**
- They are all the “son” of God** (*or “daughter”*)
- They all undergo a “passion”**
- They all obtain victory over death,
which they share with their followers**
- They all have stories about them set in
human history on earth**
- Yet none of them ever actually existed**

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- which
- They all have stories about them set in human history on earth
- Yet none of them ever actually existed

**But they were *not* all born on December 25 (and neither was Jesus for more than a century).
Etc.**

daughter”)

ers

Philo of Alexandria Tells Us...

For sources see Carrier, *Not the Impossible Faith*, pp. 250-51

- ❖ There was a pre-Christian Jewish belief in a celestial being **actually named “Jesus”** who was...
- ❖ The firstborn son of God...
- ❖ The celestial “image of God”
- ❖ God’s agent of creation...
- ❖ And God’s celestial high priest.

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❖ There was a pre-Christian Jewish belief in a celestial being **actually named “Jesus”** who was...

Romans 8:29

❖ The firstborn son of God...

❖ The celestial “image of God”

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Hebrews 2:17, 4:14, ...

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Philippians 2:5-11: Earliest known Christians believed this preexistent being descended, became incarnate and died, rose again, then appeared to select people to tell them this.

belief in a
‘Jesus’

Romans 8:29

2 Corinthians 4:4

1 Corinthians 8:6

❖ And God’s celestial high priest.

Hebrews 2:17, 4:14, ...

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On the Most Plausible Mythicist Theory: This incarnation, death, and burial took place in outer space just below the moon.

❖ And God's celestial high priest.

belief in a
"Jesus"

Romans 8:29

2 Corinthians 4:4

1 Corinthians 8:6

Hebrews 2:17, 4:14, ...

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The same was taught of Osiris: public stories put him on earth, but private stories had his death and resurrection occur in outer space just below the moon.

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Precedents in the Jewish belief system: e.g. Adam was believed to have been buried in outer space (*Revelation of Moses*).

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2 Corinthians 4:4

1 Corinthians 8:6

Hebrews 2:17, 4:14, ...

Paul's (Authentic) Letters

- ❖ **Galatians 1:11-12:** “brothers, the gospel I preached does not come from man. Neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through a **revelation** of Jesus Christ.”
- ❖ **1 Corinthians 15:1-8:** “brothers, the gospel I preached ... [is] what I also received: that **according to the scriptures** Christ died for our sins, and that he was buried, and that **according to the scriptures** he was raised on the third day, and that he **appeared** to Cephas [etc.] ... and at last he appeared to me as well.”
- ❖ **1 Corinthians 11:23:** “I **received from the Lord** what I also delivered to you, that on the night he was handed over the Lord took bread...and said...[etc.]”

Paul's (Authenticity)

Note that Jesus is not said to have appeared *before* his death. People only see him *after* his death.

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Paul's Gospel **Could mean “in fulfillment of” or “we are told by”** **Scriptures**

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Paul's (Authentic) Letters

This means Paul *hallucinated* the last supper, and thus received teachings from the *dead* Jesus (even quotes him).

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According to Paul

- ❖ **Scripture** and **Revelation** are the only sources of information Paul ever mentions anyone having.
- ❖ The Jesus he knows and refers to and speaks to is always in outer space.
- ❖ Paul never clearly places Jesus on earth or connects him to human history.

Gospels

- ❖ The Gospels come decades later and are the **first we hear** of an earthly story for Jesus.
- ❖ The Gospels are **wildly fictitious** in their content and structure.
- ❖ Every story has discernible **allegorical** or **propagandistic** intent.
- ❖ The first (Mark) looks like an extended **meta-parable** (*outsiders are told a story, while insiders are told what it really means*).

No Other Evidence...

- ❖ Everything else is either not independent (*they just echo the Gospels or what Christians said the Gospels say*)...
- ❖ Or is fabricated (*e.g. the Infancy Gospels, Jesus' Letter to Abgar, the forged epistles in the NT and beyond*)

The Roswell Analogy

- ❖ **What Really Happened:** A guy found some sticks and tinfoil in the desert.
- ❖ **What Was Said to Have Happened:** It was debris from an alien spacecraft.
- ❖ **What Was Said to Have Happened within just *Thirty Years*:** An entire flying saucer was recovered, complete with alien bodies that were autopsied by the government.

The “**tin foil in the desert**” would be analogous to the “**revelations of the archangel named Jesus**”

and

The “**flying saucer and alien bodies**” would be analogous to the “**historical Jesus of Galilee.**”

some

It was

- ❖ **What**
sticks
- ❖ **What**
debris

- ❖ **What Was Said to Have Happened within just *Thirty Years*:** An entire flying saucer was recovered, complete with alien bodies that were autopsied by the government.

Imagine if we only had the stories written by the *Roswell* believers from thirty years later (and information derived from them), and *nothing else...*

- ❖ **What**
sticks
- ❖ **What**
debris

some

It was

- ❖ **What Was Said to Have Happened within just *Thirty Years*:** An entire flying saucer was recovered, complete with alien bodies that were autopsied by the government.

We would not know about the tinfoil. All we would have are **multiple witnesses and sources** reporting a flying saucer recovery and alien body autopsy.

- ❖ **What** sticks a ome
- ❖ **What** debris t was
- ❖ **What Was Said to Have Happened within just *Thirty Years*:** An entire flying saucer was recovered, complete with alien bodies that were autopsied by the government.

❖ **What** ... me
sticks ... **Neither of which ever existed.**

❖ **What** ... was
debris

❖ **What Was Said to Have Happened within just *Thirty Years*:** An entire flying saucer was recovered, complete with alien bodies that were autopsied by the government.

The Standard Rebuttal

1. Christianity is **different** from those other religions and Jesus is **different** from those other dying-and-rising savior sons of god.
2. There are elements of Paul and the Gospels that **make more sense** if there was a real Jesus.
3. Lots of **real historical people** are unattested until generations later or not at all.
4. You can't **invent a whole man** in just one generation of storytelling.

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But they are *all* different from each other. The differences are not the issue. Their *similarities* are what identify them as a *trend*.

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But in Paul these are very few, very vague, and very debatable. And all attempts to extract such data from the Gospels fail on either facts or logic.

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1. **But those people weren't immediately worshipped as demigods about whom our earliest literature says they communicated only by revelation.**
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**If you can invent a whole flying saucer, you can
invent a whole man.**

1. **Mark even invented a three hour eclipse of the
sun. That's a lot harder to get away with than
inventing an obscure Galilean preacher.**

2. **make more sense** if there was a real Jesus.

3. Lots of **real historical people** are unattested
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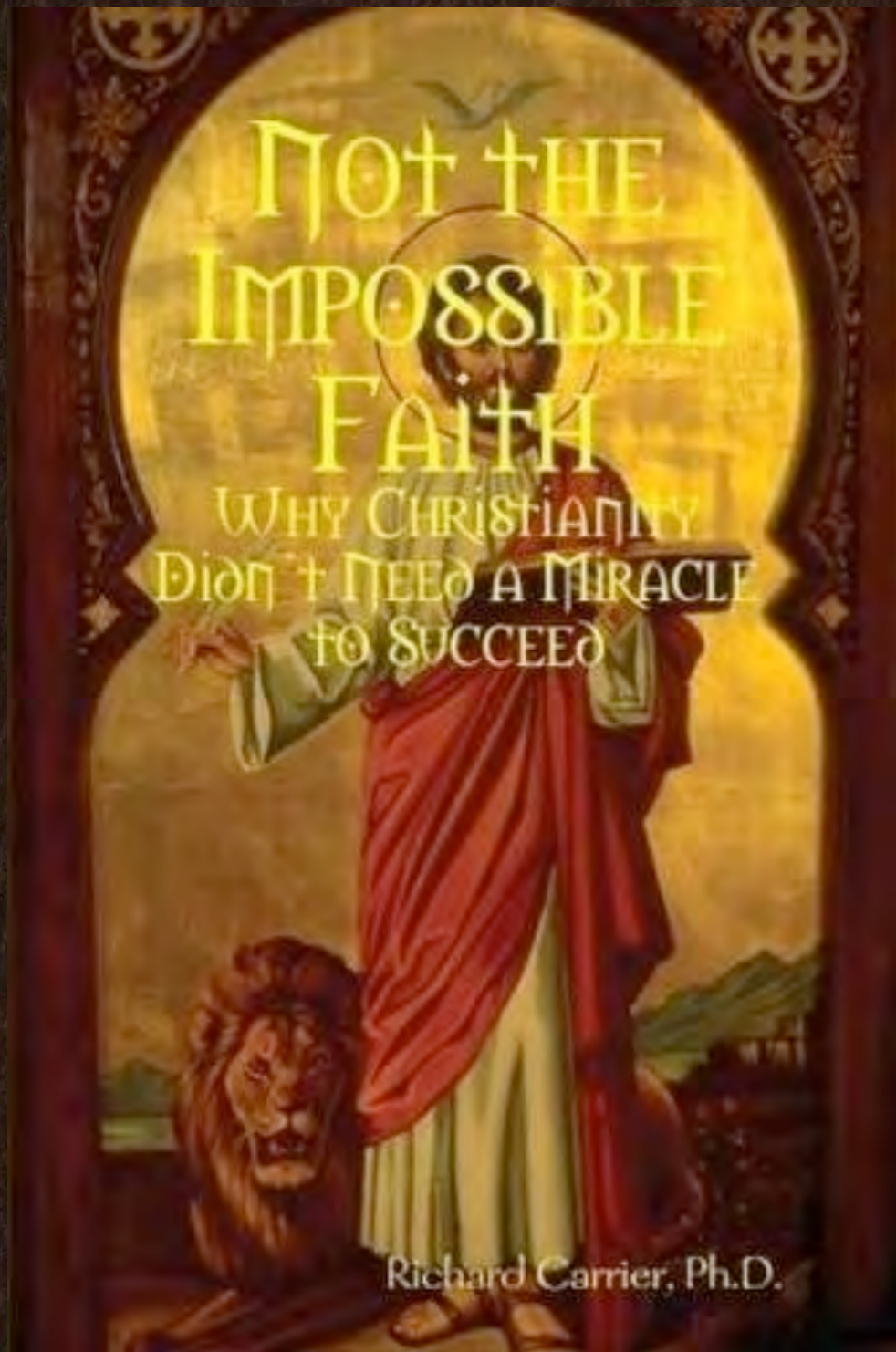
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What to Read...

- ❖ **Earl Doherty, *The Jesus Puzzle***
- ❖ **Robert Price, *The Christ Myth Theory and Its Problems***
- ❖ **Randel Helms, *Gospel Fictions***
- ❖ **Stephen Law, “Evidence, Miracles and the Existence of Jesus” (google it)**



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PROVING HISTORY

BAYES'S THEOREM *and the*
Quest for the HISTORICAL JESUS

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