

BORN IDENTITY: Was Jesus a real person?

Did Jesus Christ really exist, or is Christianity built upon a legend that is no more real than Harry Potter?

The argument against Jesus' existence, known as the Christ-myth theory was made public on CNN TV when Ellen Johnson, president of American Atheists, declared on *Larry King Live*:

The reality is there is not one shred of secular evidence there ever was a Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ and Christianity is a modern religion. And Jesus Christ is a compilation from other gods: Horus, Mithra, who had the same origins, the same death as the mythological Jesus Christ.

King paused reflectively and then replied, "So you don't believe there was a Jesus Christ?"

Without any hesitation Johnson shot back, "There was not. It is not what I believe; there is no secular evidence that JC, Jesus Christ, ever existed."

Surprised and speechless, King had no follow-up, requesting a commercial break. No rebuttal or discussion of any evidence for or against Jesus' existence was forthcoming. The international television audience was left wondering.[1]

The great Oxford scholar C. S. Lewis originally thought Jesus is a myth. In his early years as an atheist he stated,

You ask me my religious views.... I think, that I believe in no religion. There is absolutely no proof for any of them.... All religions, that is, all mythologies...are merely man's own invention -- Christ as much as Loki.[2]

Several years later, Lewis was sitting by the fire in an Oxford dorm room with T. D. Weldon, whom Lewis called "the cynic of cynics" and "the hardest boiled atheist of all the atheists I ever knew." As they were in heavy discussion about Jesus and pagan mythologies, Weldon suddenly blurted out to Lewis, "The evidence for the historicity of the Gospels was really surprisingly good.... 'All that stuff...about the Dying God.... It almost looks as if it had really happened once.'"[3]

Lewis was stunned. His "hard boiled atheist" friend's statement about evidence for Jesus was so unexpected that it prompted him to seek out the truth for himself. Lewis documents his search for truth about Jesus in his classic book *Mere Christianity*.

So, what is the evidence for Jesus' existence that Weldon referred to as "really surprisingly good"?

Evidence from Ancient History

But first, a more fundamental question: Can we establish the existence of any character from ancient history? How do we know, for example, that Alexander the Great really existed?

Virtually every historian accepts Alexander as a real person. So let's compare the evidence for Alexander with that of Jesus Christ. We begin with Alexander.

According to the historical record, in 336 b.c. Alexander the Great became king of Macedonia at 20 years of age. A military genius, this handsome, arrogant leader swept through villages, towns, and kingdoms of the Greco-Persian world until he ruled it all. It has been said of Alexander that he cried when he ran out of worlds to conquer.

Before he died at age 32, Alexander reportedly accomplished greater military deeds than anyone else in history. But today, other than a bunch of cities named Alexandria, a film by Oliver Stone, and a few books, his legacy is all but forgotten. Yet historians believe Alexander existed. Let's look at the evidence that persuades them of Alexander's historicity and then see if such evidence exists for Jesus Christ.

The historical record of Alexander and his military conquests is drawn from five ancient sources written at least 300 years after he died.[4] Although none of these writings were from eyewitnesses, historians regard them as generally accurate. Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*, written 400 years after Alexander, is the primary account of his life.

Of the 20 contemporary historical accounts on Alexander, not one survives. Later accounts exist, but each presents a different "Alexander," with much left to our imagination.

The fact that the written accounts for Alexander the Great are from sources 300 or more years after he died raises questions about their portrayal of him as a real person. Yet this late documentary evidence is overcome by his significant impact on history. To doubt Alexander's existence one would need to rewrite the history of civilization. Ultimately there is more than sufficient evidence supporting his existence.

Keeping Alexander as a reference point, we'll note that for Jesus there are both religious and secular historical accounts. In order to establish whether Jesus was a real person or simply a myth, we will attempt to answer these questions:

Is there evidence for Jesus' existence in any of the following areas:

- archaeology?
- early non-Christian accounts?
- early Christian accounts?
- early New Testament manuscripts?
- his historical impact?

Archaeological Discoveries

Although numerous details in the New Testament have been confirmed by archaeology, skeptics have argued that some key people and places connected to Jesus have never been verified, thus casting doubt on the whole account of Jesus. Three modern discoveries, however, have made this position harder to hold. Prior to the 20th century, nothing in archaeology confirmed the existence of the Roman governor Pontius Pilate and the Jewish chief priest Joseph Caiaphas. According to the New Testament, these men were central to the crucifixion of Christ. Caiaphas presided over the Jewish Sanhedrin that recommended Jesus be executed, and Pilate was the Roman governor who ultimately sent Jesus to the cross. Still, the lack of archaeological confirmation fueled speculation among skeptics that they didn't really exist.

But then in 1961 Italian archaeologists discovered a block of limestone in the coastal town of Caesarea, which was the capital of Judea during the time Pilate was Roman governor. The inscription on the stone was the dedication of an amphitheater from Pontius Pilate to Augustus Caesar. It reads, "To the honorable Augustus Tiberius Pontius Pilate prefect of Judea has dedicated [this]."

And in 1990 archaeologists discovered an ossuary (bone box) about two miles south of the Old City of Jerusalem with the inscription of Caiaphas. After three years of testing by Prof. Yuval Goren of Tel Aviv University's Department of Archaeology, and Boaz Zissu of Bar Ilan University. It has been verified as authentic "beyond a reasonable doubt." [5]

Perhaps the most important missing evidence from the archaeological record was the existence of Nazareth during the time of Christ. Skeptics wrote books alleging that Jesus' boyhood hometown didn't exist in the first century. In 2006, the American Atheist Press published a book by Rene Salm entitled, *The Myth of Nazareth*, which concludes with these exuberant words: "Celebrate, freethinkers... Christianity as we know it may be finally coming to an end!"[6] Salm's argument was clear: if first-century Nazareth didn't exist, then neither did Jesus.

But Salm's celebration was short-lived. On December 21, 2009, the Israel Antiquities Authority announced the discovery of first-century clay shards in Nazareth. Archaeologists then announced that the town of Nazareth did exist during the time of Christ (see "Was Jesus Really from Nazareth?" http://www.y-jesus.com/jesus_hometown_discovered_1.php).

Historian Paul Johnson notes that the mounting archaeological evidence for Jesus has undermined many of the arguments skeptics have used against his existence. "What is clear beyond doubt is that it is...skeptics, who have reason to fear the course of discovery." [7]

Early Non-Christian Accounts

As we have seen with the historical accounts of Alexander the Great, ancient records of significant people are often missing or incomplete. Most ancient historical documents have been destroyed through the centuries, by wars, fires, and pillaging, or simply through weathering and deterioration.

So, how much secular history survived from the time when the apostles say Jesus lived and ministered? According to E. M. Blaiklock, who has catalogued most of the non-Christian writings of the Roman Empire, "practically nothing has survived" from the time of Christ.[8]

Furthermore, most historians only wrote about major political leaders, wars, and nations. As an itinerant preacher from a tiny Judean village, Jesus wasn't considered noteworthy to first-century Roman or Jewish historians. So you wouldn't expect mention of him. Yet Darrell Bock notes, "It is amazing and significant that Jesus shows up at all in the sources we have. Even a seemingly important 'middle management' figure like Pontius Pilate, the decade-long governor of Judea, is mentioned by only a single pagan source, the Roman historian Tacitus." [9] So, what non-Christian historical evidence do we have for Jesus' existence?

"Several Jewish writings refer to Jesus. Although they consist of only a few brief, bitter passages intended to discount Jesus' deity, these very early Jewish writings don't begin to hint that he was not a historical person." [10] The noted Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, who was born just a few years after Jesus died, would have been keenly aware of his reputation among both Romans and Jews. In his famous *Antiquities of the Jews* (a.d. 93), Josephus wrote of James, "the brother of Jesus the so-called Christ." [11] This account verifying Jesus' existence is accepted by virtually all scholars as historically reliable.

Another passage in *Antiquities* speaks more extensively of Jesus.[12] This passage speaks of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, stating that he "was the Messiah." Since Josephus was a non-Christian, some scholars believe these words were altered later by Christian scribes. However, an Arabic translation of this same passage was under Islamic control, where alterations by Christians would have been virtually impossible. Josephus' words in it also speak of Jesus' reported crucifixion and resurrection. Following is a translation of the Arabic version:

At this time there was a man who was called Jesus. His conduct was good, and he was known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified, and he died. 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 thought to be the Messiah.”[13]

Josephus’ confirmation of Jesus’ existence here is widely accepted by scholars.[14]

Since Jesus’ Jewish opponents had the most to gain by denying his existence, it is highly unlikely that Josephus or the Jewish scribes would have written of Jesus’ life if he were not a real person. Israeli scholar Shlomo Pines agrees: “Even the most bitter opponents of Christianity never expressed any doubt as to Jesus having really lived.”[15]

Early Non-Christian Accounts

What about secular historians—those who lived in ancient times but weren’t religiously motivated? Let’s look at the evidence.

Around a.d. 55 the pagan historian Thallus wrote of an unusual darkness during Jesus’ crucifixion. World historian Will Durant notes that this early historical account, written just over two decades after Jesus’ death, “took the existence of Christ for granted. The denial of that existence never seems to have occurred even to the bitterest gentile or Jewish opponents of nascent Christianity.”[16]

The great Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus wrote negatively of Christ and Christians, documenting in his *Annals* (a.d. 107-115) that Jesus had lived during the reign of Tiberius and “suffered under Pontius Pilate, Procurator of Judea while Tiberius was emperor; that Christ’s teachings had already spread to Rome; and that Christians were considered criminals and tortured in a variety of ways, including crucifixion.”[17]

Also, “Roman government officials such as Pliny the Younger and even two Caesars, Trajan and Hadrian, wrote intriguing letters mentioning Jesus and early Christian origins. About A.D. 112, Pliny describes weekly gatherings of early Christians who met before dawn, singing and worshipping Christ as Deity.”[18] Pliny required Christians be killed unless they denied Christ and worshiped the gods and emperor. In his writing he tells of true believers who were willing to die rather than renounce Christ.

Dr. Gary Habermas notes that a total of nine early non-Christian secular writers mention Jesus. That is the same number of secular writers who mention Tiberius Caesar, the Roman emperor during Jesus’ ministry.¹⁹ Altogether these early non-Christian sources provide the following facts about Jesus Christ:

- Jesus was from Nazareth.
- Jesus lived a wise and virtuous life.
- Jesus was crucified in Judea under Pontius Pilate during the reign of Tiberius Caesar at Passover time, being considered the Jewish king.
- Jesus was believed by his disciples to have died and risen from the dead three days later.
- Jesus’ enemies acknowledged that he performed unusual feats, which they called “sorcery.”
- Jesus’ small band of disciples multiplied rapidly, spreading as far as Rome.
- Jesus’ disciples denied polytheism, lived moral lives, and worshiped Christ as God.

- New Testament scholar Norman Geisler remarked, “This general outline is perfectly congruent with that of the New Testament.”[20]

The Encyclopedia Britannica cites these various secular accounts of Jesus’ life as convincing proof of his existence. “These independent accounts prove that in ancient times even the opponents of Christianity never doubted the historicity of Jesus.”[21]

Early Christian Accounts

Early Christians wrote numerous letters, sermons, commentaries, and creeds about Jesus. These creeds, which speak of Jesus, appeared as early as five years after his crucifixion.[22] many of these writings were burned under the edict of the Roman emperor Diocletian. Fortunately, thousands survived.

The earliest writings outside the New Testament were from disciples of Paul, Peter, John, and the other apostles. In other words, these early church leaders were taught about Jesus from those who had seen and heard him. Their writings confirm New Testament details about Jesus, including his crucifixion and resurrection. The most important of these early writings outside the New Testament are from Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, and Polycarp of Smyrna.[23]

Clement of Rome was mentioned by Paul (Philippians 4:3). In about a.d. 96 Clement wrote a lengthy letter to the church at Corinth in which he refers to Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament messianic prophecies who died for our sins and rose again as “Lord.”[24]

Ignatius of Antioch, a disciple of the apostle John, wrote six letters to churches and one to a fellow bishop, Polycarp, in which he refers to Jesus.[25]

Polycarp of Smyrna, also a disciple of the apostle John, refers to all 27 New Testament books in his letter to the Philippian church (a.d. 110-135). Polycarp was burned at the stake because he refused to renounce his faith in Jesus, stating, "Eighty-six years I have served Christ, and He never did me any wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?"[26]

So, how many of these early writings exist? Incredibly, over 36,000 complete or partial writings, some from the first century, have been discovered.[27] The words in these nonbiblical writings include the entire New Testament except for a few verses.[28]

The New Testament

Thousands of copies of ancient New Testament manuscripts exist today, the earliest being a tiny fragment of the Gospel of John dating from between a.d. 115 and 125. Skeptics reject this New Testament evidence for Jesus’ existence, even though its Gospel narratives are the primary accounts of his words and life. But objective historians recognize the value of early New Testament manuscripts as evidence for Jesus’ existence.

Atheistic historian Michael Grant writes, “If we apply to the New Testament, as we should, the same sort of criteria as we should apply to other ancient writings containing historical material, we can no more reject Jesus’ existence than we can reject the existence of a mass of pagan personages whose reality as historical figures is never questioned.”[29]

The Gospel narratives claim to be eyewitness accounts of Jesus’ life and words. For example, Luke begins his Gospel with these words to a nobleman named Theophilus: “Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who

from the first were eyewitnesses.... Since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus.”[30]
Noted archaeologist Sir William Ramsey originally argued against Luke’s historical credibility. However, after extensive research, Ramsey acknowledged, “Luke is a historian of the first rank.... This author should be placed along with the very greatest historians.... Luke’s history is unsurpassed in respect of its trustworthiness.”[31]

German critics of the 18th and 19th centuries argued that the New Testament books were written well after the apostles would have died. If that were true, they couldn’t have been eyewitness accounts. However, discoveries of early manuscript copies convince most scholars they were written much earlier.

William Albright dated all the New Testament books “very probably sometime between about a.d. 50 and a.d. 75.”[32] Skeptical scholar John A. T. Robinson of Cambridge dates all New Testament books by a.d. 40-65 -- much too early for a myth or legend to develop.[33]

Although he had originally considered Jesus a myth, C. S. Lewis became convinced of the truth of the Gospels. Later he wrote, “Now, as a literary historian, I am perfectly convinced that...the Gospels are...not legends. I have read a great deal of legend and I am quite clear that they are not the same sort of thing.”[34]

Over 24,000 complete or partial manuscript copies of the New Testament led New Testament scholar F. F. Bruce to acknowledge, “There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament.”³⁸ Paul Johnson remarks, “If we consider that Tacitus, for example, survives in only one medieval manuscript, the quantity of early New Testament manuscripts is remarkable.”[35]

(For more on the reliability of the New Testament, see http://www.y-jesus.com/jesusdoc_1.php.)

Historical Impact

The historian Thomas Carlyle said, “No great man lives in vain. The history of the world is but the biography of great men.”[36] As Carlyle notes, great men leave their footprints in history, impacting nations and institutions. Such impact, when confirmed by archaeology and written documentation, distinguish a real person from a myth.

For example, historians accept Alexander the Great as a real person mostly because his military conquests altered nations, governments, and laws. Likewise, we acknowledge Julius and Tiberius Caesar as real men largely because of the trail of evidence they left on our world. But what of Jesus Christ and his impact on our world, beyond simply being a religious leader?

At first, Jesus’ impact was limited to his small group of followers. The average Roman citizen didn’t feel his impact until many years after his death. The rest of the world had little if any knowledge of him. Jesus marshaled no army. He wrote no books and changed no laws. The Jewish leaders and Roman Caesars had hoped to wipe out his memory, and it appeared they would succeed.

Within a generation of Jesus’ crucifixion, Jerusalem and its Jewish rulers were utterly destroyed. Today, all we see of ancient Rome is ruins. Caesar’s mighty legions and the pomp of Roman imperial power have faded into oblivion. Yet how is Jesus remembered today? What is his enduring influence?

More books have been written about Jesus than about any other person in history.

Nations have used his words as the bedrock of their governments. According to Durant, “The triumph of Christ was the beginning of democracy.”[37]

His Sermon on the Mount established a new paradigm in ethics and morals.

Schools, hospitals, and humanitarian works have been founded in his name. Over 100 great universities -- including Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Dartmouth, Columbia, and Oxford -- owe their beginnings to followers of Christ.[38]

The elevated role of women in Western culture traces its roots back to Jesus. (Women in Jesus’ day were considered inferior and virtual nonpersons until his teaching was followed.)

Slavery was abolished in Britain and America due to Jesus’ teaching that each human life is valuable.

Remarkably, Jesus made all of this impact as a result of just a three-year period of public ministry. If Jesus didn’t exist, one must wonder how a myth could so alter history. When noted author and world historian H. G. Wells was asked who has left the greatest legacy on history, he replied, “By this test Jesus stands first.”[39]

Yale historian Jaroslav Pelikan writes of him, “Regardless of what anyone may personally think or believe about him, Jesus of Nazareth has been the dominant figure in the history of Western culture for almost twenty centuries... It is from his birth that most of the human race dates its calendars, it is by his name that millions curse and in his name that millions pray.”[40]

Myth vs. Reality

In light of all this evidence, any honest skeptic must acknowledge the profound differences between Jesus and the gods of mythology. Both secular history and the Gospel accounts paint the picture of Jesus as a real person. The non-Christian scientist Albert Einstein stated, “No one can read the Gospels without feeling the actual presence of Jesus. His personality pulsates in every word. No myth is filled with such life... No man can deny the fact that Jesus existed, nor that his sayings are beautiful.”[41]

In contrast, accounts of mythological gods depict unrealistic gods with elements of fantasy: Mithra was supposedly born out of a rock.[42] Horus is depicted with the head of a falcon.[43] Bacchus, Hercules, and others were flown to heaven on the horse Pegasus. Osiris was killed, chopped into 14 pieces, and reassembled by his wife, Isis, and brought back to life.[44]

Habermas notes, “The first account of a dying and rising god that somewhat parallels the story of Jesus’ resurrection appeared at least 100 years after the reports of Jesus’ resurrection.”[45]

T. N. D. Mettinger, professor at Lund University, writes, “The consensus among modern scholars -- nearly universal -- is that there were no dying and rising gods that preceded Christianity. They all post-dated the first century.”[46]

Most mythical gods are depicted as superheroes living out human fantasies and lusts. Jesus, on the other hand, exemplified our loftiest ideals of moral character. The Gospels portray Jesus as a man of humility, compassion and strength of character. “The Jesus of the gospels, unlike the Jesus of sentimentalism, is both gentle and tough, witty and serious, stern and tenderhearted.”[47]

However, the fundamental difference between Jesus and the pagan gods is one of myth versus reality. Pagan gods are simply fictitious characters that have no roots in history, while the evidence demonstrates that Jesus is real.

C. S. Lewis recounts a conversation he had with J. R. R. Tolkien, the author of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. “The story of Christ,” said Tolkien, “is simply a true myth: a myth...with this tremendous difference that it really happened.”[48]

One must look at the evidence objectively and draw his or her own conclusions about Jesus’ existence. New Testament scholar F. F. Bruce believes that any unbiased historian will be compelled by the evidence that Jesus was a real person. He writes, “Some writers may toy with the fancy of a ‘Christ-myth,’ but they do not do so on the grounds of historical evidence. The historicity of Christ is as axiomatic for an unbiased historian as the historicity of Julius Caesar. It is not historians who propagate the ‘Christ-myth’ theories.”[49]

Here Was a Man

Within 150 years of Jesus’ life, 42 authors mention him in their writings, including nine non-Christian sources. During that same time period, only nine secular authors mention Tiberius Caesar. And only five sources report the military conquests of Julius Caesar. Yet no historian even hints that either of these Caesars didn’t exist.[50]

And new archaeological discoveries continue to confirm details of the Gospel accounts, the latest being Pilate, Caiaphas, and the town of Nazareth.

In his classic, *The Story of Civilization*, historian Will Durant addresses the issue of Jesus’ existence and whether or not his story could have been plagiarized from ancient pagan religions. He poses this provocative question: “Did Christ exist? Is the life story of the founder of Christianity the product of human sorrow, imagination, and hope—a myth comparable to the legends of Krishna, Osiris, Attis, Adonis, Dionysus, and Mithras?”[51]

After the great secular historian sifted through the evidence, he answered his own question—did Christ exist?—with the following insightful conclusion: “That a few simple men should in one generation have invented so powerful and appealing a personality, so lofty an ethic and so inspiring a vision of human brotherhood, would be a miracle far more incredible than any recorded in the Gospels. The outlines of the life, character, and teaching of Christ, remain reasonably clear, and constitute the most fascinating feature in the history of Western man.”[52]

Historian Paul Johnson agrees with Durant, stating, “Christianity, like the Judaism from which it sprang, is a historical religion, or it is nothing.... I doubt if there is any serious scholar alive now who would deny Jesus’ historical existence. Indeed, He is much better authenticated than many secular figures of antiquity whose existence no one has ever presumed to question.”[53]

Even atheist historian Michael Grant, author of *Jesus: An Historian’s Review of the Gospels*, noted, “To sum up, modern critical methods fail to support the Christ-myth theory. It has again and again been answered and annihilated by first-rank scholars.... No serious scholar has ventured to postulate the non-historicity of Jesus -- or at any rate very few, and they have not succeeded in disposing of the much stronger, indeed very abundant, evidence to the contrary.”[54]

Another non-Christian historian, H. G. Wells, writes of Jesus, “Here was a man. This part of the tale could not have been invented.”[55]

The historical record of archaeological and documentary evidence is clear; Jesus Christ was a real person who altered history. However, it is not merely the fact of Jesus’ existence that altered history. What changed an empire, and ultimately our world, was the remarkable event that eyewitnesses say occurred after Jesus’ death on the cross.

Pete Steinfelds, in *The New York Times*, writes, “Shortly after Jesus was executed, his followers were suddenly galvanized from a baffled and cowering group into people whose message about a living Jesus and a coming kingdom, preached at the risk of their lives, eventually changed an empire. Something happened.... But exactly what?”[56]

That “something” that altered history is the fact that his followers were convinced Jesus had risen bodily from the dead.

But is Jesus’ resurrection just a legendary account imagined by his followers, or is the historical evidence for it as compelling as that for his existence? Several skeptics began investigations to prove the resurrection account false. See what they discovered in “Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?” http://www.y-jesus.com/body_count1.php.

End Notes

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2. Quoted in David C. Downing, *The Most Reluctant Convert* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 57.
3. C. S. Lewis, *The Inspirational Writings of C. S. Lewis: Surprised by Joy* (New York: Inspirational Press, 1986), 122-3.
4. “Alexander the Great: The ‘Good’ Sources,” Livius, http://www.livius.org/aj-al/alexander/alexander_z1b.html.
5. Jennifer Walsh, “Ancient bone box might point to biblical home of Caiaphas,” MSNBC.com, August 31, 2011, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/44347890/ns/technology_and_science-science/t/ancient-bone-box-might-point-biblical-home-caiaphas/.
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7. Paul Johnson, “A Historian Looks at Jesus,” speech to Dallas Seminary, 1986.
8. Quoted in Josh McDowell and Bill Wilson, *Evidence for the Historical Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1993), 23.
9. Darrell L. Bock, *Studying the Historical Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 46.
10. Quoted in Will Durant, *Caesar and Christ, vol. 3 of The Story of Civilization* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972), 554.
11. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1966), 423. The quote is from book 20 of the Antiquities.
12. *Ibid.*, 379.
13. Bock, 57.
14. McDowell and Wilson, 42-43.
15. *Ibid.*, 44.
16. Durant, 555.
17. Quoted in Durant, 281. The quote is from *Annals* 15:44.

18. Gary R. Habermas, "Was Jesus Real," InterVarsity.org, August 8, 2008, <http://www.intervarsity.org/studentsoul/item/was-jesus-real>.
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20. Norman Geisler and Peter Bocchino, *Unshakable Foundations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Bethany House, 2001), 269.
21. Quoted in Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict, vol. 1* (Nashville: Nelson, 1979), 87.
22. Habermas and Licona, 212.
23. McDowell and Wilson, 74-79.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Norman L. Geisler and Paul K. Hoffman, eds., *Why I Am a Christian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001), 150.
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29. Michael Grant, *Jesus: An Historian's Review of the Gospels* (London: Rigel, 2004), 199-200.
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34. C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), 158.
35. F. F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1984), 168.
36. Quoted in Christopher Lee, *This Sceptred Isle* (London: Penguin, 1997), 1.
37. Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy* (New York: Pocket, 1961), 428.
38. Cited in Bill Bright, *Believing God for the Impossible* (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life, 1979), 177-8.
39. Quoted in Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Christian Evidences* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1957), 163.
40. Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus through the Centuries* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 1.
41. Quoted in "What Life Means to Einstein: An Interview by George Sylvester Viereck," *Saturday Evening Post*, October 26, 1929, 17.
42. Lee Strobel, *The Case for the Real Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 170-71. Mithraism developed too late to have influenced Christianity. "Mithraism was a late Roman mystery religion that became a chief rival to Christianity in the second century and later." Quoted in Strobel, 166-76.
43. Ibid 163.
44. Habermas and Licona, 90.
45. Strobel, 160. Mettinger said he was going to take exception to that nearly universal scholarly conviction. He takes a decidedly minority position and claims that there are at least three and possibly as many as five dying and rising gods that predate Christianity.... In the end, after combing through all these accounts and critically analyzing them Mettinger adds that "none of these serve as parallels to Jesus." Mettinger writes, "There is, as far as I am aware, no prima facie evidence that the death and resurrection of Jesus is a mythological construct, drawing on the myths and rites of the dying and rising gods of the surrounding world.... The death and resurrection of Jesus retains its unique character in the history of religions"
46. Quoted in Vinoth Ramachandra, *Gods That Fail* (London: Paternoster Press, 1996), 198.
47. Quoted in Chuck Colson, "Jesus Christ and Harry Potter," *Breakpoint*, July 29, 2011, <http://www.breakpoint.org/bpcommentaries/entry/13/17568>.
48. F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 119.

49. Habermas and Licona, 127.
50. Will Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, vol. 3 of *The Story of Civilization*, 553.
51. Ibid.
52. Paul Johnson, Ibid.
53. In the Utube documentary, *Zeitgeist*, Peter Joseph uses spurious sources (Gerald Massey and Acharya S.), to falsely build a case that Jesus is a “copycat” of the ancient Egyptian god, Horus. Dr. Ben Witherington notes, “Not a single one of these authors and sources are experts in the Bible, Biblical history, the Ancient Near East, Egyptology, or any of the cognate fields....they are not reliable sources of information about the origins of Christianity, Judaism, or much of anything else of relevance to this discussion.” <http://benwitherington.blogspot.com/2007/12/zeitgeist-of-zeitgeist-movie.html>. The false parallels between Jesus and Horus are analyzed and systematically refuted in the following website: <http://kingdavid8.com/Copycat/JesusHorus.html>.
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56. Peter Steinfels, “Jesus Died -- And Then What Happened?” *New York Times*, April 3, 1988.

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