

# Apologetics — Jesus (Historicity)

“some judgments are so probable as to be certain; for example, Jesus really existed, and he really was crucified, just as Julius Caesar really existed and was assassinated. .... We can in fact know as much about Jesus as we can about any figure in the ancient world.”

— Marcus Borg, Professor of Religion and Culture at Oregon State University, in *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions*

“There are those who argue that Jesus is a figment of the Church’s imagination, that there never was a Jesus at all. I have to say that I do not know any respectable critical scholar who says that any more.”

— Richard A. Burridge, Professor of Biblical Interpretation, Kings College, London, in *Jesus Now and Then*

“This view [that Jesus didn’t exist] is demonstrably false. It is fuelled by a regrettable form of atheist prejudice, which holds all the main primary sources, and Christian people, in contempt. .... Most of its proponents are also extraordinarily incompetent.”

— Maurice Casey, Nottingham University, in *Jesus of Nazareth*

“Jesus did exist; and we know more about him than about almost any Palestinian Jew before 70 C.E.”

— Prof James Charlesworth, Princeton Theological Seminary, in *Jesus Within Judaism*

“The information about Jesus which can be gleaned from sources other than the gospels – a few references in Josephus, one in Tacitus, and the information implicit in Paul’s letters, for example – does little more than confirm the historical reality of Jesus and the general time and place of his activity. .... He was a Galilean, and it is likely that his principal teaching and healing activity was in Galilee, but he was executed in Jerusalem. .... There are other facts about Jesus which are equally certain ....”

— WD Davies & EP Sanders, *Jesus: from the Jewish Point of View*, in *The Cambridge History of Judaism* Vol 3, 621-626.

“I don’t think there’s any serious historian who doubts the existence of Jesus .... We have more evidence for Jesus than we have for almost anybody from his time period.”

— Bart Ehrman, University of North Carolina in an interview by *The Infidel Guy*.

“Despite this enormous range of opinion, there are several points on which virtually all scholars of antiquity agree. Jesus was a Jewish man, known to be a preacher and teacher, who was crucified (a Roman form of execution) in Jerusalem during the reign of the Roman emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judea. Even though this is the view of nearly every trained scholar on the planet, it is not the view of a group of writers who are usually labeled, and often label themselves, mythicists.”

— Bart Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist? The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth*, (Harper One), 14.

“Research in the historical Jesus has taken several positive steps in recent years. .... the persistent trend in recent years is to see the Gospels as essentially reliable, especially when properly understood, and to view the historical Jesus in terms much closer to Christianity’s traditional understanding.”

— Prof Craig Evans, Arcadia Divinity College, Arcadia University, in *What are They Saying about the Historical Jesus?*

“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. .... In recent years, ‘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.’”

— Michael Grant, eminent historian of the Roman Empire, in *Jesus: an historian’s review of the gospels*.

“[The following is beyond reasonable doubt from everyone’s point of view:] that Jesus was known in both Galilee and Jerusalem, that he was a teacher, that he carried out cures of various illnesses, particularly demon possession and that these were widely regarded as miraculous; that he was involved in controversy with fellow Jews over questions of the law of Moses; and that he was crucified in the governorship of Pontius Pilate.”

— A.E. Harvey, formerly at Oxford University, in *Jesus and the constraints of history*.

“So in one sense I think I’m not alone in feeling that to show the ill-informed and illogical nature of the current wave of “mythicist” proponents is a bit like having to demonstrate that the earth isn’t flat, or that the sun doesn’t revolve around the earth, or that the moon-landings weren’t done on a movie lot.”

— Larry Hurtado, Emeritus Professor, Edinburgh University, on Larry Hurtado’s Blog.

"An ancient historian has no problem seeing the phenomenon of Jesus as an historical one. His many surprising aspects only help anchor him in history. Myth and legend would have created a more predictable figure. The writings that sprang up about Jesus also reveal to us a movement of thought and an experience of life so unusual that something much more substantial than the imagination is needed to explain it."

— Emeritus Professor Edwin Judge, Ancient History Research Centre, Macquarie University, Sydney, in the Foreword to the truth about Jesus by P Barnett.

"there is a consensus of sorts on the basic outline of Jesus' life. Most scholars agree that Jesus was baptised by John, debated with fellow Jews on how best to live according to God's will, engaged in healings and exorcisms, taught in parables, gathered male and female followers in Galilee, went to Jerusalem, and was crucified by Roman soldiers during the governorship of Pontius Pilate (26-36 CE)."

— Amy-Jill Devine, Professor of New Testament Studies at Vanderbilt University, quoted in Wikipedia.

"I think that the New Testament does provide *prima facie* evidence for the historicity of Jesus. It is clear, then, that if we are going to apply to the New Testament the same sort of criteria as we should apply to other ancient writings containing historical material, we should not require independent confirmation of the New Testament's claim that Jesus existed."

— Jeffery Jay Lowder, writing on the Secular Web.

".... a growing conviction among many scholars that the Gospels tell us more about Jesus and his aims than we had previously thought .... subsequent Christianity may be in greater continuity with Jesus than was previously thought."

— J Paget, Cambridge University, in The Cambridge Companion to Jesus.

"Jesus did more than just exist. He said and did a great many things that most historians are reasonably certain we can know about today. .... A hundred and fifty years ago a fairly well-respected scholar named Bruno Bauer maintained that the historical Jesus never existed. Anyone who says that today – in the academic world at least – gets grouped with the skinheads who say there was no Holocaust and the scientific holdouts who want to believe the world is flat."

— M.A. Powell, Trinity Lutheran Seminary, in The Jesus Debate.

"Historical reconstruction is never absolutely certain, and in the case of Jesus it is sometimes highly uncertain. Despite this, we have a good idea of the main lines of his ministry and his message. We know who he was, what he did, what he taught, and why he died. .... the dominant view [among scholars] today seems to be that we can know pretty well what Jesus was out to accomplish, that we can know a lot about what he said, and that those two things make sense within the world of first-century Judaism."

— EP Sanders, Oxford & Duke Universities, in The Historical Figure of Jesus.

"Today, nearly all historians, whether Christians or not, accept that Jesus existed and that the gospels contain plenty of valuable evidence which has to be weighed and assessed critically."

— Graham Stanton, Cambridge University, in The Gospels and Jesus.

"Biblical scholars and classical historians now regard it [the theory that Jesus didn't exist] as effectively refuted." Robert Van Voorst, Western Theological Seminary, in Jesus outside the New Testament. "[In answer to the question, did Jesus exist?] I would say it is much more likely that he did than he didn't. To believe that he had been imagined or invented is a much harder task than to rely on the available evidence, which is obviously not as clear-cut as one would like, but is sufficiently good to say that somebody by the name of Jesus existed around the time when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea in the first century AD."

— Geza Vermes, Oxford University, in A new church is born, History magazine.

"The historical evidence for Jesus himself is extraordinarily good. .... From time to time people try to suggest that Jesus of Nazareth never existed, but virtually all historians of whatever background now agree that he did."

— NT Wright, Oxford & St Andrews Universities, in the Guardian.