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## Bible Belt Blasphemy Did Jesus Exist? So What?

By [Blair Scott](#)

Did Jesus exist? What implications does this have for modern Christianity?



As a skeptic, I cannot accept with 100% certainty that a man named Jesus (or Yeshua, or any other variation thereof) actually existed. However, I can say that the probability (not to be confused with possibility) that a man named Jesus existed is significant enough to at least acknowledge that probability. It is important to note that there is absolutely zero evidence for Jesus. All the "Gospels" and other references about Jesus were written after Jesus' death, so none of the authors were first-hand witnesses to the life of Jesus. Because of this, I have to at least allow for the equal probability that Jesus didn't exist and is a complete fabrication based on pre-Christian mythology.

As a comparison, there is no evidence that a man named William Wallace existed. Does this mean the legend of Braveheart is completely unfounded, or is there an element of truth hidden within the legend? All stories about Wallace were written years after his death and again, we are faced with the same dilemma; there are no first-hand accounts. Historians have to weed out the mythology of the Braveheart

legend to reach the probable historical William Wallace.

So what is the difference between Wallace from Jesus? Why are we more skeptical of Jesus than Wallace? The biggest factor is that the stories of Wallace never claimed him to be metaphysical, the Son of God, or resurrected. Wallace did not become the world's Savior after the Council of Nicea.

If I were to tell you that I had a white poodle at home, there would be no reason to doubt what I am saying because the probability of me having such a white poodle is significant; Wallace is a white poodle. If I were to tell you that I had a white poodle at home that could talk and fly, you would have serious reason to doubt me because the probability of me having such a white poodle is highly unlikely; the theological Jesus is a flying and talking white poodle.

So while it is important to look into the Braveheart legend and attempt to separate truth from non-truth, it is even more important to do so for the legend of Jesus. So how do we do that?

The manuscripts (Gospels) were not signed or dated, so the authors attributed to the "gospels" were guesses made by the church. (NOTE: the word gospel comes from Greek, which means "good news"). The dating of the gospels places them within the following chronology (there are other versions of this chronology, but they are not the majority view and tend to be apologetics and not scholarly):

1. 27-30 AD: Death of Jesus.
2. 30-60 AD: Oral tradition (story telling).
3. 50-70 AD: Letters of Paul (first "Gospel").
4. 60-70 AD: First edition of Thomas.
5. 70 AD: Destruction of the temple (fall of Jerusalem).
6. 70-80 AD: Mark.
7. 85-90 AD: Matthew.
8. 85-95 AD: Luke
9. 90-100 AD: John

When reading the Gospels it is easy to ascertain that Luke and (especially) Matthew borrowed heavily from Mark. John borrowed slightly from Mark and possibly from Matthew and Luke. Thomas and Paul seem to be

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doing their own thing. Paul never met Jesus and didn't believe the stories he had heard until the "Damascus Incident". While Thomas is considered to be apocryphal, the majority of the sayings in Thomas agree with Mark and later Matthew and Luke.

Because of the extensive borrowing, we see a process of embellishment as the stories are re-told. Each author adding different aspects to the story based on the societal context toward values and issues at the time of authorship. The task then becomes to remove the embellishments and remove the added metaphysics (ones obviously stolen from Pagan sources) and find the historical Jesus.

How bad is the embellishment? Using the chronology for the gospels above, let's take a look at a saying attributed to Jesus:

- I. Mark 4:24 - The standard you apply will be the standard applied to you, and then some.
- II. Matthew 7:1 - Don't pass judgment, so you won't be judged. Don't forget, the judgment you and out will be the judgment you get back. And the standard you apply will be the standard applied to you.
- III. Luke 6:37-8 - Don't pass judgment, and you won't be judged; don't condemn, and you won't be condemned; forgive, and you'll be forgiven. (38) Give, and it will be given to you: they'll put in your lap a full measure, packed down, sifted and overflowing. For the standard you apply will be the standard applied to you.
- IV. John 7:24 - Don't judge by appearances; judge by what is right.

Look at the embellishment and changes as the chronology progresses. If we look at that chronology, we can say with higher probability that Jesus DID say (or something close to it), "The standard you apply will be the standard applied to you, then some." For the rest we can say with higher probability that Jesus DID NOT say such things, that they were embellishments and add-ons made by the author to fit the social context at the time of authorship.

If we read through the entire Gospels we begin to see a constant pattern of embellishment and add-ons. Mark is essentially the original written source (oral traditions and story telling were the original source). So the task then becomes to isolate within in Mark what is fantasy and what is reality. This is where the heat of the debate really begins.

Using the above as part of the overall process in identifying fantasy from reality, a high probability list of Jesus' words can be created. The Jesus Seminar, part of the Westar Institute, compiled a list of the top 15 things that had the highest probability of having been spoken by Jesus, either verbatim with or closely matching what is written in the Gospels. A more detailed list can be found in [The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus](#), [The Acts of Jesus: The Search for the Authentic Deeds of Jesus](#), and [The Complete Gospels: Annotated Scholars Version \(SV\)](#).

1. Turn the other cheek.
2. Give the shirt off your back.
3. Congratulations to the poor.
4. Go the second mile.
5. Love your enemies.
6. The parable of the leaven.
7. Give to Caesar and to God.
8. Give to everyone who begs.
9. The parable of the Samaritan.
10. Congratulations to the hungry.
11. Congratulations to those who weep.
12. The parable of the shrewd manager.
13. The parable of the vineyard laborers hired at different hours.
14. God called "Abba" (Father).
15. The parable of the mustard seed.

From a scientific standpoint, none of the metaphysical attributes given to Jesus are reality. Many of the items attributed to Jesus are blatant thievery from pre-Christian religions (Paganism). It is this very embellishment and thievery that is used to argue for the fictional Jesus; that he, as a man, never existed in the first place. That argument has some merit because of the lack of evidence, but it is, in my view, not the most likely scenario. Although I can argue with the best of them that the man never existed.

What can we say that Jesus actually did? Using the work done by the Jesus Seminar and others we can say with higher probability that Jesus DID (or was involved with) the following:

1. Was baptized by John the Baptist.
2. Was an itinerant teacher in Galilee that preached in synagogues.
3. Proclaimed the kingdom of God.
4. Enjoyed popularity in Galilee and a few surrounding areas.
5. Drove out what he thought to be demons.
6. Cured some sick people.
7. Some saw him as mad, others as an agent of Beelzebub.
8. Consorted openly with "outcasts".
9. Because of criticism, used aphorism and parable to share his views.
10. Practiced prayer in seclusion.
11. Herod Antipas and John the Baptist were beheaded.
12. Jesus was executed by Pontius Pilate.
13. His parents were named Joseph and Mary (although Joseph may have been a step-father).
14. The body of Jesus decayed and was likely desecrated.

When you're selling a religion and passing down oral tradition, the stories change. What good is a messiah that cannot resurrect? So the early apologists (which is essentially what the Gospel authors were) added a resurrection to make it fit prophecy. What good is a messiah born in Nazareth that was supposed to be born in Bethlehem according to prophecy? So the authors changed the story to read Bethlehem (note the Gospels disagree on Jesus' birth place: it was changed to match the prophecy). This goes on and on&

When we remove the metaphysical and we remove the embellishments, then what do we have left? Who was this man made into myth? Does this change Christianity? Did Jesus say he was "the way, the truth, and the light"? No. Did Jesus say that the only way to Heaven was through him? No. Did Jesus say he was dying for our sins? No. Did Jesus resurrect? No. Did Jesus walk on water? No.

Where does that leave Christianity? As a sect of Judaism and nothing more. No resurrection, no prophecy, no walking on water, no two thieves, no virgin birth, and no feeding the multitudes (among others).

The majority of Biblical scholars agree that the Gospels contain embellishment and fantasy. So why haven't the Christians heard about it (or even the general public for that matter)? Easy; why would a Biblical scholar risk his career by telling everyone that their faith is in something that is false? One need only look at the current plight of evolution to see how far that would go. The Ivory Tower of Biblical scholarship is a safe haven from the scrutiny of the public's eye. It is a place to hide the truth from those that rely so heavily upon the fantasy.

The Jesus Seminar has fallen under a lot of scrutiny because it has refused to keep its research, findings, meetings, and materials secret. They release what their conclusions and their papers to the public.

Fundamentalist theologians are the biggest opponents of the Jesus Seminar, especially ridiculing the voting process. I find that rather ironic considering the Bible itself was "formed" through a similar voting process in 325AD (OT (Council of Nicea)) and 367AD (NT (Council of Trent)).

In addition to the obvious embellishments and the rational destruction of the metaphysical, there are other problems that have to be dealt with. The biggest is translation. The most accepted version of the Bible is the King James Version (especially to Fundamentalists). When King James requested a translation, where did his translators get the original Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew texts?

Prior to King James' request, at least four scholars translated the Latin Vulgate into English. Two of them (that I know of) were killed for heresy. The Church at the time considered English to be a dirty and commoner's language (wonder why they didn't want the commoners to read the Bible?). King James' scribes got a hold of these translations and wrote the King James Version by translating English (translated from Latin) into English. No translations were made from the Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic texts.

Another problem with translation is context. You cannot translate literally from one language to another without losing the original intent and meaning or without losing context. For example, if I say, "El coche azul" (Spanish) and translate it into English literally, it would be "the car blue." If we know the language's context and grammatical rules then we can properly translate the phrase into "the blue car." This is a simple example and in no way identifies the incredible task of doing the same for Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic. Added on to that is the daunting task of keeping 1st Century societal context in mind and the mindset of that time.

Here are two examples that go to the very heart of Christian dogma:

Son of Man: In the three major Semitic languages (Aramaic, Hebrew, and Arabic) the term barnasha means "human being". Jesus often referred to himself as a human being (28 times in the Gospels). Barnasha comes from bar (son) and nasha (man). The meaning and translation of barnasha has created a lot of confusion in the Gospels. It is improper to translate the Aramaic term of barnasha literally as "son of man" - and yet most translations did and still do to this

day. In the Aramaic language the word bar is combined with many other words to create different meanings - most specifically it means a "likeness." For example barabba means "resembles his father". Barhila translated literally would mean "son of power" but in reality it means "soldier". So when we read in the Gospels the phrase "son of man" it should be read correctly as "human being".

Keeping the context of bar in mind, what about "Son of God?"

Son of God: As we learned above, bar means a likeness or resemblance to the suffix word. The Aramaic term that Son of God comes from is bardalaha. Translated literally as "son of God" it does not mean this. Bardalaha in reality means "like God" or "God-like". So when Jesus is referred to as the "Son of God" we should read this correctly as "God-like" or "like God". So what does that tell us about the translations we read in today's Bibles? It tells us that Jesus was not really the Son of God - but that he was "God-like". There is a big difference. Jesus himself repeatedly referred to himself as a "human being". The Aramaic reference does not mean one is physically divine - it means there is an important spiritual relationship between God and the man whom is bestowed that phraseology.

Another example is self-gratifying capitalization. Why are Son of Man and Son of God capitalized? Greek, Hebrew, and Arab/Aramaic writings do not use upper and lowercase separations (by English standards Greek would be all uppercase). So where did the capital letters come from? They were placed by translators to emphasize and give title where title did not exist. Read through the Bible again and notice the "son of man" phrase. When used positively toward Jesus, it is capitalized. When used negatively, it remains lower case. Coincidence or apologetics?



All of this leads us to one conclusion: Christianity is without a Christ. They probably (and possibly) have a Jesus but they definitely do not have a Christ (a Greek word, by the way, from Christos).

The Jesusian has more probability to stand on. The lack of evidence is overwhelming (which often leads people to conclude that Jesus as a man never existed in the first place) and the embellishments obvious. As the fundamentalist will tell you, "That is what faith is for." That's a lot of faith to muster up in order to believe all of the crud piled on top of the stories about a man that dared to challenge the Jewish tradition and possibly the Roman government.

If concrete evidence were to surface that Jesus existed, escalating the probability beyond what it is now, what implications would that hold for atheists, and more specifically, me? None. Proving Jesus existed would not make me a Christian any more than proving Muhammed existed

would make me a Muslim, or that Buddha existed would make me a Buddhist. Christianity has turned a man into a myth. Proving the man existed does not prove the myth. Are we witnessing the death of a religion?