

What the 'Jesus Never Existed' Folks Often Overlook

Every Christmas, we get a spate of articles from major newspapers and magazines with titles such as "Who was the real Jesus?" or "Who was the Historical Jesus," or, "The Virgin Birth of Jesus: Fact or Fable?"

Surely they have run out of novel titles by now.

This year's entry was from the *Washington Post*: "[Did historical Jesus really exist? The evidence just doesn't add up](#)," by Raphael Lataster, a "lecturer in religious studies at the University of Sydney," and author of [There Was No Jesus, There Is No God](#).

"The first problem we encounter when trying to discover more about the Historical Jesus," says Lataster, "is the lack of early sources." He continues:

"The earliest sources only reference the clearly fictional Christ of Faith. These early sources, compiled decades after the alleged events, all stem from Christian authors eager to promote Christianity – which gives us reason to question them."

The documentary evidence is weak? Compared to modern events, sure it is. But what about other *ancient* events and persons?

The fact is that there are [more manuscripts](#) documenting New Testament events, and these manuscripts are closer in time to the events they allege to have happened, than is the case with any other documents from the ancient world.

That doesn't mean you can't reject the historicity of the gospel story, but it does mean that if you reject it on the

basis of the normal rules of historicity, then *ipso facto* you're going have to reject almost everything else you think you know about the ancient world.

Did Caesar cross the Rubicon? Did Alexander conquer the world? Did Cleopatra really die by the bite of an asp? The documentary evidence for these events is insignificant in comparison to the events in the life of Jesus. But no one I know of concludes we should abandon our belief in them because of a lack of documentary evidence.

And, yes, many of the accounts of other ancient figures were "eager to promote" one thing or another. In fact, many of the documents we rely on to establish ancient events were official accounts written by royal lackeys.

Several years ago I was reading a book of quotations and came across a quote from Jesus. The attribution read, "Jesus, (if you can believe Luke)." Just for fun, I looked up a quote by Socrates. In that case the attribution simply read, "Socrates." It didn't say "Socrates (if you can believe Plato)."

The people who make these arguments talk as if they are simply being rational. But it isn't very rational to hold the beliefs you disagree with to a completely different standard than the things you believe yourself.

Did historical Jesus really *not* exist? The evidence just doesn't add up.

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