



## Part 1: The New Testament As History

### INTRODUCTION – Getting To Know The Pagan Christ

ENCOUNTERING THE CONVICTIONS OF TOM HARPUR

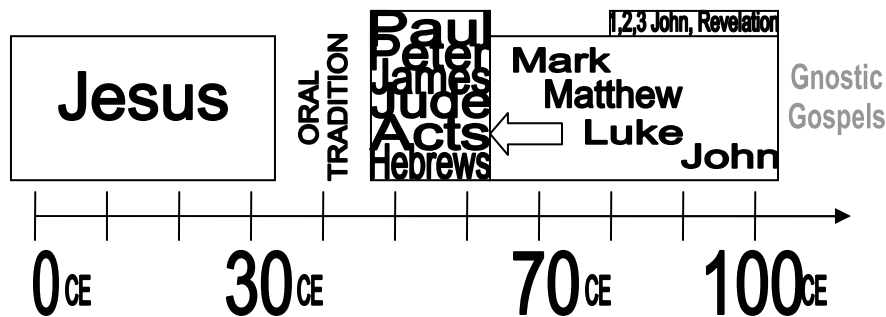
#### This week...

- The Gospel stories of Jesus that we have in our Bibles should be considered on the same level as the stories about Robin Hood, King Arthur, Zeus or Horus. This is what the biblical authors intended. To treat Jesus as a figure of history is misguided.
- The letters of Paul (and other New Testament books) are Gnostic teachings, encouraging people to find their own inner Christ. Paul never believed in a historical Jesus, but in the universal 'truth' of the Christ-myth.
- The New Testament writings are too late to be historical, and not supported by secular evidence. Trying to find history within the Bible is a category mistake

#### Next Week...

- The Gospel stories are a reworking of older, universal myths, mostly based on Egyptian beliefs. The Jesus of the Gospels is a composite of various Pagan deities.
- The story of Jesus (his incarnation, suffering, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension) is the story of each of us in allegorical form. It is the story of our divine spirits descending into matter, suffering, dying, and being released to return to our pure state, as one with the divine.
- Christians must learn to read the Bible for its *meaning* and not just focus on the surface. This will lead to a renovation of our faith and pave the way for a new spirit of ecumenism with all world religions, since at our core we all believe the same story.

### Closing The Gap Between Jesus & The New Testament



NOTE: Paul's epistles are all written before 60 CE. Also, there are good reasons to see at least Mark and Luke as even earlier than depicted here. Acts, Luke's second writing chronicling the development of the early church, does not mention Paul's death, Nero's persecution of Christians, or the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE. Also, in **1 Timothy 5:18**, Paul refers *back* to **Luke 10:7** as "Scripture". This places Luke-Acts before 70 CE and Mark before that. Mark refers to the "high priest" without having to name him and to Pilate without mentioning what office he held, suggesting that Mark wrote so close to the events that qualifying information was unnecessary for his readers. (Caiaphas and Pilate held their offices until 36 and 37 CE, respectively.) The fact is, there is no reason to date any of the Synoptic Gospels later than 70 CE, except for Jesus' detailed prediction of the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, which does not easily fit into a secular worldview.

### What The New Testament Authors Intended

The New Testament authors wrote to *persuade*, not just to record. But note, this does not discount what they record as historically valid. We have several examples of ancient historians writing with an obviously strong bias and a clear agenda (e.g., Herodotus, Livy, Tacitus, Josephus), but their works are still considered works of *history*.

Luke 1:1-4; John 19:35; 20:31; Acts 2:22;  
1 Corinthians 15:3-8; 2 Peter 1:16; 1 John 1:1; 2 John 1:7

### A COMPARISON OF JESUS' & PAUL'S TEACHING...

(AGAINST THE THEORY THAT PAUL KNEW NOTHING OF A REAL, TEACHING, PREACHING JESUS.)

- **TORAH** – Paul explains why Jesus broke the rules (**Galatians 3:24-25; 4:1-5**) and what the implications are for the New Testament church (**Romans 14:14, 17**).
- **TRADITION** – Paul explains why the religious traditions of Israel no longer hold authority for believers (**Colossians 2:8, 16-17**).
- **TEMPLE** – Paul explains that believers are now the Temple, the "Body of Christ" (**1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19**; also see **1 Peter 2:5**).
- **TRIBALISM** – Paul explains that all ethnic, gender, and socio-economic distinctions are dismissed through Christ (**Galatians 3:28-29; Colossians 3:11**).
- **TERRITORY** – Paul explains and applies Jesus' distinctive teaching about peace, non-violence, and respectful support of secular government (**Romans 12:14-13:7**; also see **1 Peter 2:9**, where Peter explains that Christ's kingdom transcends territory).

### Jesus Outside The New Testament

Tacitus, Roman historian / Suetonius, Roman historian.  
Pliny the Younger, Roman administrator / Mara Bar-Serapion (2<sup>nd</sup> Century letter)  
Josephus, Jewish historian working for Romans / The Talmud

### CONCLUSION – The Ring Of Truth

1 Corinthians 12:3

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY...

AUDIO... *God's Library; The Scene of the Crime; The Jesus Scandals*

BOOKS... *Jesus Outside the New Testament (Robert E. Van Voorst); The Historical Jesus (Gary R. Habermas); What Are the Gospels?: A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography, Second Edition (Richard A. Burridge); Is The Bible True? (Jeffrey L. Sheler); The Resurrection of the Son of God (N. T. Wright); Letters From A Skeptic (Gregory Boyd)*

### HOME CHURCH QUESTIONS...

#### WARMING UP...

1. Take time to review this week's message and discuss your reactions. Talk about what most challenged, puzzled, or encouraged you.

#### LOOK TO THE BOOK...

2. *Take the Composer-Conductor Challenge!* Get to know the inter-relatedness of Jesus' teaching and Paul's application by looking up each of the Scriptures listed under "A COMPARISON OF JESUS' & PAUL'S TEACHING" above. For each of the five points, try to find what specific teachings (in word or deed) of Jesus Paul is basing his application on. For the sake of time, feel free to divide the five points up among sub-groups, then report back on your findings.

#### SO WHAT?...

3. What teaching of Jesus (as applied by Paul) do you think Christians in general need to do a better job at applying today? What teaching do you most struggle with? Why? Pray for the church as a whole, The Meeting House specifically, and each other, that we might represent Christ and his Gospel well in these areas.

**Bruxy Cavey @ THE MEETING HOUSE – Sunday, April 16 / 23, 2006**