



# Jesus: Failed Prophet or Son of God?

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## Who Was Jesus?

Two contrasting visions:

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A wandering Jewish prophet, whose extraordinary ability to offend those in authority eventually resulted in his crucifixion.

OR

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The Creator of the Universe and Eternal Son of God, whose death and resurrection reversed the results of the fall and brought eternal redemption to the human race and to all of God's creation.

*A slight difference of opinion!*

## Some Assumptions of the Critics

1. The New Testament Gospels are not history, but theological propaganda.
2. The Gospels were not written by eyewitnesses, but by individuals far removed from the actual events.
3. The church was primarily interested in the "Christ of Faith" not the "Jesus of History." The later Church therefore created most of the sayings and deeds attributed to Jesus, and then read these sayings back into his life.
4. Anything of a supernatural or miraculous nature in the Gospels is historically suspect.

## Responding to the Critics

1. The Role of Presuppositions in Historical Research
  - Are miracles possible? (*Which is more historically objective, to assume miracles are impossible, or to keep an open but cautious mind?*)
  - What criteria would be necessary to confirm a miracle?
  - The historian's role should be to find out what happened, not to assume in advance would, could or could not have happened.
2. Were the Gospel Writers "Biased?"
3. Are the Gospels Intended to Be Historical?
4. Were the Gospel Writers Credible Historians?

Historical details in Acts:

- *Anthypatos* – "proconsul" of Cyprus (Acts 13:7)
- *Stratego* – "magistrates" of Philippi (Acts 16:20)
- *Politarchas* – "city leaders" of Thessalonica (Acts 17:6)
- *Asiarchon* – "officials" of Asia Minor (Acts 19:31)
- *Ho Protos* – "chief official" of Malta (Acts 28:7)

A true sense of the Zeitgeist

## 5. Evidence for a Reliable Gospel Tradition

- a. The Importance of Eyewitness Testimony
  
- b. The Faithful Transmission of the Gospel Tradition
  - The model of the Rabbis
  - Paul's use of words for "tradition" (cf. 1 Cor. 11:23; 15:1–2)
  - The evidence of Synoptic parallels
  
- c. The Church's Willingness to Preserve Difficult Sayings
  
- d. Distinction Between the Words of Jesus and of Christian Prophets.
  
- e. The Absence of Gospel Discussion on Key Issues in the Later Church

## 6. The Resurrection as the Key to the Miracle Tradition of the New Testament

- a. The Importance of the Resurrection
  - Vindication of Jesus' identity and claims
  - Confirmation of the truth of Christianity
  - Assurance that we, too, will be raised
  
- b. Five (practically) irrefutable facts confirming the Resurrection
  1. Jesus died by Roman crucifixion c. A.D. 30
  2. Jesus was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea
  3. The tomb was discovered empty on the third day
  4. Many credible witnesses saw Jesus alive
  5. The transformed lives of the disciples

## Resources

Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* (Thomas Nelson, 2013)  
Mark Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus* (Zondervan, 2007)  
Michael Bird, *How God Became Jesus* (Zondervan, 2014)  
Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (IVP, 2007)  
Michael Wilkins, *Jesus Under Fire* (Zondervan, 1996)  
Greg Boyd and Paul Eddy, *Lord or Legend: Wrestling with the Jesus Dilemma* (Baker, 2007)



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