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Zeitgeist Refuted (Part 2)



Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

In "Zeitgeist Refuted (Part 2)", Steve Gregg challenges the claims made by the movie "Zeitgeist" about the origins of Christianity and Jesus. The documentary implies that Christianity is based on ancient astrological traditions and pagan mythology, but Gregg argues that these claims lack historical accuracy and evidence. He provides evidence to support the existence of Jesus as a historical figure and argues that the Gospels are a reliable historical record of his life. Gregg plans to give lectures challenging modern challenges to Christianity, such as the Da Vinci Code and claims made by Bart Ehrman and the Jesus Seminar.

Transcript

Another theme that the movie Zeitgeist moves to after these parallels with pagan myths is the idea that the main themes of Jesus' life are drawn upon ancient astrological traditions. Now, of course, there is a connection between astrological traditions and some of these ancient mythological pagan ideas because, of course, they did worship the sun and the stars and so forth. And, in fact, astrology is very part and parcel with very much of pagan religion.

But this movie is telling us that actually many of the main ideas of Christianity about Jesus came from these astrological traditions, too. For example, it is said that the Virgin Mary in the Bible is actually referring to the constellation Virgo, which, of course, you know Virgo is Latin for virgin. Which, the movie says Virgo is also called the house of bread.

Now, I don't know if that's true or not. I haven't done enough research to know if Virgo is called the house of bread. It doesn't matter to me if it is or not.

But Bethlehem, the place of Jesus' birth, the word Bethlehem means house of bread. And so that connection is made. Virgo is the house of bread.

Bethlehem is the house of bread. And so, actually, this is a quote. It says, Bethlehem, in the Bible, he means, Bethlehem is a reference to the constellation Virgo, a place in the sky, not on earth.

Now, what in the world that could mean, I can't imagine, except that it's certainly suggesting that Jesus was not, to be concerned, historical. And that Christians somewhere got the wrong idea that the ancient Christian myth was saying Jesus was born on earth in a place called the house of bread, Bethlehem, when, in fact, whoever was the real originator of the myth was really referring to Virgo, the house of bread. Jesus is a deity from the sky, not from an earthly, this is apparently what's being implied.

Though the documentary never really explains how this works. After all, none of the, as far as we know, none of the ancient astrologers ever depicted one of the gods being born from the Virgo, that is, from the constellation Virgo. There's nothing in ancient astrology that I've ever been able to find that speaks of Virgo giving birth.

So, I mean, why Christianity's virgin birth would be associated with Virgo escapes me. And, frankly, there's no evidence given that this really is a connection at all. The fact that Virgo means virgin, and the Bible speaks about a virgin, is not the same thing as pointing to a cause and effect relationship between those two things.

You can probably find many references to virgins in ancient literature in different connections. But a constellation of a virgin and an actual virgin having a baby on earth are not identical concepts. And certainly there's no reason to believe there's a dependence of one on the other.

How about the star in the three kings in December 25th? Remember, a lot of times these gods of the pagan religions were said to have these associations. Born on December 25th, there's a star, there were three kings that came. Now, the assumption of the movie is that these things are all true of Jesus too.

Well, we don't have, of course, December 25th having anything to do with Jesus. And the three kings is certainly a misnomer, since no kings are known to have visited Jesus in his birth. And the wise men were not said to be three in number, so there's no connection there.

There was a star, however. Now, according to Zeitgeist, the star in the east is Sirius, the brightest star in the night sky. And we're told this, on December 24th, Sirius aligns with the three brightest stars in Orion's Belt.

So that you've got the three stars of Orion's Belt kind of diagonally coming down from the right to the left there. And at the bottom is Sirius, the brightest star. So you've got kind of four stars in a row.

And it says those stars in Orion's Belt are called the three kings. This may be true. I don't know if it's true or not.

It has no connection to Christianity, obviously, because the Bible never speaks of three kings. But, allegedly, these three stars on Orion's Belt are called the three kings. And

they point on December 25th to the rising sun, God's sun, S-U-N, at winter solstice.

Okay, so what? How about the twelve disciples? He talks about the story of Jesus' twelve disciples. This statement is made in *Zeitgeist*. Quote, they are simply the twelve constellations of the zodiac.

Well, that's an important claim to make. You've got four historical records in the Gospels talking about four individuals. They have names.

They have things that they say and do. They're real people. And to simply say, no, they're not.

They're just the twelve signs of the zodiac. Okay, well, could you maybe help us out here? Could you prove it? Is there some evidence somewhere for this? There is none. Now, this is, again, a demonstration of Peter Joseph's profound understanding of comparative religions and of Christianity and the Bible in particular.

He talks about the prominence of the number twelve in the Bible, which, of course, he thinks in every case it's just a reference to the twelve signs of the zodiac. He said in the Bible there's twelve tribes of Israel. There are twelve sons of Jacob.

There are twelve judges. There are twelve great patriarchs. There are twelve Old Testament prophets and twelve kings of Israel.

Now, the fact of the matter is that—oh, and twelve princes of Israel, too, we're told. The fact of the matter is that three of these twelves are all the same. The twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve sons of Jacob and the twelve great patriarchs are all the same.

The twelve tribes are the families of the twelve patriarchs who are the twelve sons of Jacob. So he's stacking the list by repetitions. Now, were there twelve judges? Apparently so.

The Book of Judges, if you count up the judges of the Book of Judges, there were twelve of them. But the Book of Judges never makes an issue of the number of them. They lived at all different times and so forth.

You can find twelve of them, but you can't find any reference in the Bible to the twelve judges, as if that number somehow is significant to the biblical writer. How about the twelve Old Testament prophets? Missed it by about five. There were seventeen.

And the twelve kings of Israel? Actually, if you mean the northern tribes, that was nineteen. If you mean the southern kingdom, that was twenty. So if you add them up, it doesn't come to twelve.

If you take them separately, it doesn't come to twelve. If you divide them by one another, it doesn't come to twelve. If you subtract one from the other, it does come to

twelve.

I'm not really sure how the math was done on this. And how about the twelve princes of Israel? What in the world is that about? If you've ever read the Old Testament, you know that there are kings, and all of their sons were princes, and some of these kings had seventy sons, seventy princes. I don't know of anywhere in the Bible that speaks of twelve princes of Israel.

I'm not sure why the maker of this video thinks it is. But see, the point is here, you might say, well, that's nitpicking. I mean, he's right about some of this.

There are twelve tribes, twelve sons, twelve judges, twelve great patriarchs. You know, if the guy gets like four out of seven right, why pick on him for being inaccurate about the last three? Well, the problem here is not that he got the majority right and the minority wrong. It's that he presented information that must have come from somewhere, and it didn't come from the Bible.

Yet he thought it did. Now the problem here is he's trying to tell us what the Bible teaches, where it came from, what the origins of the Bible teach, and he apparently has not read the Bible. He has no knowledge of the Bible.

He's apparently gotten lists from different people. I don't know who his sources were for these, but the sad thing is that in this movie he states these things without any documentation, but he states them authoritatively. In fact, he even likes to make fun of people who don't know this and talk about how ignorant they are of these things, which always is embarrassing when somebody is so self-confident and arrogant in their claims, and they're saying things that any person with a modicum of knowledge or subject knows are mistakes.

Well, the significance of the crucifixion and Jesus rising after three days, according to the astrology of this movie, the winter solstice is the death of the sun, S-U-N, which appears to move south until December 22nd. Then, for three days, it seems to stop its descent in the vicinity of the Southern Cross. You know the constellation called the Southern Cross? Around the 22nd, it stops descending in the general area of the Southern Cross, and then it moves one degree north on December 25th like a resurrection.

Well, problems here. The movie says, thus it is said. Now, thus it is said, for this reason, it is said.

Well, what is said? This. The sun died on the cross, was dead for three days, only to be resurrected or born again. Now, notice the sun there is the S-U-N.

So who is it who says this? Thus it is said that the sun died on the cross? Now, apparently he's trying to represent what Christians say, but the Christians have never said anything remotely like this about the sun, S-U-N. Jesus is not equated with the sun. He's not the

sun god of the Christians.

So who is it that said this? Are we supposed to believe that the ancient religions, for which Christianity is said to have borrowed these ideas, that they used to say this? They used to say the sun died on the cross, was dead for three days, and rose again. I think that's what he's trying to make us think. Unless he's saying, no, when Christians came up with this schema, it was really because of this astrological stuff, but I guess that was forgotten by the Christian church, and they later thought it was really about some historical event.

Well, we know that the ancient religions didn't ever say this, because you know why? The southern cross, the constellation of the southern cross, was not discovered until the 16th century, A.D. A little late to influence Christianity's views on this subject. Like, a millennium and a half? Too late? Therefore, the idea that the sun died on the cross, which is based on the assumption that the sun's descent stops near the southern cross, but no one knew that was the southern cross until the 16th century. No one called it that.

It's clear that no ancient religion said the sun died on the cross. So who did say it? Not the Christians, not the pagans. So who did? Only the movie.

I've never heard anyone else say it except the movie. However, they say they do not celebrate the resurrection of the sun until the spring equinox or Easter. This is because at the spring equinox, the sun officially overpowers the evil darkness as daytime becomes longer in duration than the night.

So this is why we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, because the spring equinox is when the days grow longer than the nights. It's strange that Christians forgot about that so quickly and thought that this all happened at the spring equinox because that was the Jewish Passover. The Bible makes an issue of the fact that Jesus was the Passover lamb and he was sacrificed on the Jewish Passover.

It happens to coincide, perhaps, in some years, in most years, with the spring equinox, but that has nothing to do with why the resurrection of Jesus is celebrated. And yet he says that's why they do it. He's telling us why Christians do what they do, why Christians say what they say, why the Bible says what it says, but he doesn't know what Christians do, what Christians say, or what the Bible says.

And you might wonder, then, if something as easily researched as the Bible, which is in every hotel room, something so accessible, he hasn't researched that, why should I believe he's researched the Egyptian Book of the Dead and the ancient Mithraic texts, which you have to go to the British Museum to find parchments of? You can't really... they're not really accessible. If he doesn't know any more than he does about Christianity and the Bible, which, by the way, is the focus of this whole presentation, the

likelihood that he knows anything about these mythical religions is not very great. He goes on.

He says... oh, he loves... he makes fun of Christians here. He says, The Christian concept of the end of the world arose from a mistranslation of Matthew 28. Were you aware of that? In Matthew 28, in King James, verse 20, Jesus said, Lo, I am with you even to the end of the world.

Thus the phrase, the end of the world. He says, Christians got their concept of the end of the world from this translation of this verse. But in fact, as it points out, that's a mistranslation.

The word world is aeon, which means age. And all modern translations say, even to the end of the age, not the end of the world. But the point is, I've never heard of a Christian basing their view of the end of the world on Jesus saying, I'm with you to the end of the world, or the end of the age, or anything else.

Our view of the end of the world is based on a complete... thematic treatment of the subject throughout the New Testament. About a resurrection on the last day. About the earth burning up with a fervent heat and being replaced with a new heaven and earth.

These are not found in Jesus' statement, Lo, I'm with you to the end of the world. This guy doesn't even know where we get the doctrine, and yet he mocks Christians. I didn't get his quote here, I would have, but he says, tell that to those Christians who think the end of the world is coming.

Because they don't understand that the whole idea of the end of the world comes from mistranslation. A Matthew 28 20. He's actually the one who doesn't understand.

That's one of the embarrassing things watching the movie, is to hear someone... I always get embarrassed. Whether someone calls me on the air, or I'm reading in a book, or seeing a movie like this, where someone says, don't those fools know such and such? And yet you know that such and such is wrong, and the one calling you out is the fool. He's the one who doesn't have his information straight.

Now, this film says that there are four ages, astrological ages mentioned in the Bible. The first is the age of Taurus, the bull, represented by the golden cap. Did you know that? And of course Moses represents the succeeding age, the age of Ares the ram.

Now, according to this movie, I'll tell you what he says, this is a quote from the transcript. Moses comes down from Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments and is very upset to see the people worshipping a golden bull cap. In fact, he shattered the stone tablets and instructed his people to kill each other in order to purify themselves.

Most biblical scholars would attribute this anger to the fact that the Israelites were

worshipping a false idol, or something like that. But no! All Bible scholars are wrong. By the way, he's quite correct here.

Most Bible scholars would say the reason that Moses was angry is because they're worshipping an idol. He got that part right. What he got wrong is he thinks that's not right.

He says the reality is, and I'm not sure where the documentation is for this reality, but the reality is that the golden bull is Taurus the bull, and Moses represents the new age of Ares the ram. This is why the Jews, even today, still blow a ram's horn. Don't ask any rabbi! Why do you Jews blow a ram's horn? Why do you blow the shofar? Well, they're certainly going to say because the age of Ares arrived with Moses.

Moses represents the new age of Ares, and upon the new age, everyone must shed the old age. Now this is a very important statement because they're going to say that Jesus brought in the next age of Pisces. But we're now facing the introduction of the age of Aquarius, the next one after that.

And since Jesus was the Lord, or the figure of Pisces, and the coming of a new age requires everyone to shed the old age, what does the coming of the age of Aquarius mean but shedding the age of Pisces, which is Jesus? Jesus ushered in the age of Pisces the fish. How do you know? Well, check it out. Now Jesus is the figure who ushers in the age following Ares, the age of Pisces, the two fish.

Fish symbolism is very abundant in the New Testament. And by the way, he ought to know. Jesus feeds 5,000 people with bread and two fish.

How do we know he wasn't issuing in the age of bread? When he begins his ministry walking along Galilee, which he spells wrongly, he befriends two fishermen who follow him. Two fish-er-men. Actually, there were four, but that doesn't work with Pisces.

Pisces is two fish. I guess two fish and two fishermen are kind of the same thing. And I think we've all seen the Jesus fish on the backs of people's cars.

Little do they know what it actually means. It is a pagan astrological symbol for the sun's kingdom during the age of Pisces. Also, Jesus assumed his assumed birthday is essentially the starting of this age.

Now, did you know... Do you have one of those fish on your car? You better tear it off right now because that is an astrological pagan symbol. At least if we're to trust this man's authority. But historians have a different opinion about that.

The fish symbol had nothing to do with the age of Pisces. It came from the fact that the persecuted Christians in the 2nd and 3rd century looked for a way to identify themselves to each other at a time when it was not safe to say, I'm a Christian. And they found that

a very simple little drawing made of two arches intersecting at a certain point that looked like a fish was a simple way.

A man walking along the road meeting a stranger as they were talking about other subjects might use his stick to draw one of those arches in the sand. If the other one was a Christian, he'd draw the other arch. And they'd say, oh, you're a Christian too.

Why a fish? Because the Greek word fish is ikthus. And ikthus is an acrostic for the first letters of the words Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior. In the Greek.

Take the first letters of those words. It spells ikthus, which is the Greek word for fish. It made a simple way for them to have sort of a countersign, a secret countersign at a time where you couldn't outright say you're a Christian to a stranger, lest he would turn you over to the authorities who'd feed you to the lions.

But little do we know. He says. I just love it when he does this in his book.

Little do those Christians know that this is the reality. Well, I think little does he know anything about any of the subjects he talks about in this film. Oh, and by the way, what about the age of Aquarius? Is that in the Bible? You bet it is.

What's Aquarius? The water-bearer. Now, this is going to really stun you. In Luke 22.10, Jesus told his disciples to find a man bearing a water pot and follow him to an upper room where he'd hold the last Passover with the disciples.

A man with a water pot. Aquarius. How could it be missed? How could I have missed it all these years? Is this the only place in all literature that mentions a man carrying a water pot? And it's a rather cryptic reference, don't you think, to Aquarius? If it is that, when Luke wrote that, you think, you know, he's trying to get a secret message across here.

It's about the age of Aquarius is about to dawn. Really? According to this author, it wasn't about to dawn. It's about to dawn now.

In the 21st century. But there's an allusion to the age of Aquarius here. Maybe not.

Now, we come to the meat and potatoes here. Here's where this argument goes at the end of this segment. He says, furthermore, is there any non-biblical historical evidence of any person living with the name Jesus, the son of Mary, who traveled about with 12 followers, healing people and the like? There are numerous historians who lived in and around the Mediterranean, either during or soon after the assumed life of Jesus.

How many of these historians document this figure? Not one. I might just ask him, how many would you expect to document? Jesus was not a significant political figure. In his lifetime, the Roman historians would not have even noticed him if they had tripped over him.

He was a Jewish kind of rabbi guy. How many Jewish rabbis are recorded in the Roman historians? Jesus never traveled outside of Palestine. Why would the Romans take him? Even Pilate, who was the Roman authority in Palestine, I mean, knew who he was but didn't pay much attention to him.

It's not surprising that Roman historians writing Roman political history wouldn't mention a man who was not a Roman political figure. Wasn't even a Roman. Wasn't even somebody they would have even noticed him until a generation or so later when his movement was taking over the empire.

Actually, it took a century or more for it to do that. Zeitgeist alleges, however, to be fair, that doesn't mean defenders of historical Jesus haven't claimed the contrary. Four historians are typically referenced to justify Jesus' existence.

Pliny the Younger, Suetonius, Tacitus, and are the first three. They're the Roman ones. Each one of their entries consists of only a few sentences at best and only refer to Christus or the Christ, not Jesus.

Which in fact is not a name but a title. So, obviously, they don't document anything because they use a title instead of his name. It means the anointed one.

That is, by the way, occult knowledge being revealed to you right there. It's very hard to find that information out. Christ means the anointed one.

Actually, every Christian knows that if they've been saved for about six months or less. The fourth source is Josephus, the Jewish historian, and that source has been proven to be a forgery for hundreds of years. Sadly, it's still cited as true, says Zeitgeist.

Well, let's look at this. He says, You would think that a guy who rose from the dead and ascended to heaven for all eyes to see and performed a wealth of miracles acclaimed to him would have made it into the historical record. It didn't.

Because once the evidence is weighed, there is very high odds that the figure known as Jesus did not even exist. He was just another sun god myth. Well, this business about Jesus ascending into heaven for all eyes to see, actually, Jesus ascended into heaven in front of a very small group of people.

He didn't even appear after his resurrection to any unbelievers except his brother James. But let's check this out. He mentions Tacitus, he mentions Suetonius, he mentions Pliny the Younger, he mentions Josephus.

What really is found there? Cornelius Tacitus was the greatest Roman historian during the days of the empire, and he wrote concerning the rumor that Nero had burned Rome in his book Annals 1544. Tacitus wrote, Therefore, to scotch the rumor, that is the rumor that Nero had set the fire to burn Rome, Nero substituted as culprits and punished with

the utmost refinements of cruelty a class of men loathed for their vices whom the crowd styled Christians. Christus, which is the Latin form of the name Christ, from whom they got their name, had been executed by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate when Tiberius was emperor.

Now this writer had no interest in confirming anything about Christianity. He was a pagan Roman historian. He thought Christians were full of vices and rightfully persecuted.

But he did say that Christus, after whom the Christians were named, was executed by sentence of procurator Pontius Pilate when Tiberius was emperor. Not much detail, but what details there agrees with what the Gospels say. What's interesting about this is the Zeitgeist narrative says, you can't prove anything from this because he doesn't use the word name Jesus.

He doesn't use the name Jesus, he says Christ, implying how do we even know that we're talking about the same guy that we call Jesus? Well, how many Christs were there crucified under Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius Caesar? We know of none, except the one that we call Jesus. It looks like a fairly rock-solid confirmation, at least of the historical existence of Jesus and his death. Suetonius is another Roman historian.

He wrote the lives of the first twelve Caesars. In his Life of Claudius, he wrote about how Claudius, the emperor, banished all the Jews from Rome because of insurrections that were going on there. We actually read about that banishment of the Jews from Rome by Claudius in Acts chapter 18, because Priscilla and Aquila were banished from Rome because of that.

They came to Corinth and Paul met them there. But it says they were banished there because Claudius had banished all the Jews from Rome. Well, that's what did happen.

Suetonius talks about it. He says, as the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Christus, he, that is, Emperor Claudius, expelled them, the Jews, from Rome. Now, Christus is not exactly the same as Christus, but almost all scholars believe that Suetonius simply misspelled Christus.

And we know that the disputes over Christ were causing great disturbances in the Roman Empire around the time that Claudius did this, because the Jews who accepted the Messiah and the Jews who did not were very hostile to each other, and particularly the ones who did not liked to persecute the ones who did. We don't know all the details of this banishment of the Jews from Rome, but it makes a likely scenario for why Claudius said, all you Jews get out of here. Just leave Rome.

I don't want you here, because there's disturbances continually over this Christus. If that's not Christ, we have no idea who it is, but Christ fits the picture chronologically and

even linguistically pretty closely there. Then we got Pliny the Younger.

In A.D. 112, Pliny the Younger was the governor of Bithynia, and his emperor was Trajan, and Christianity was outlawed in the Roman Empire at this time under Trajan, and Pliny was dutifully arresting Christians and interviewing them to find out what crimes they'd committed so that he could decide how to punish them. But he found out they hadn't done any crimes at all, and he wasn't sure how he should punish them, so he wrote a letter to Trajan to ask that very thing. Basically, the letter is longer than this piece here, but Pliny writes to Trajan and says, I can't figure out what these people are doing wrong, and should I really punish these people? And he says, when he interrogated them, this is what he found out from them.

Now, this is the year 112 A.D. It's obviously after the time of Christ, but it tells us what Christians believed within two generations of the alleged crucifixion of Christ. It says, They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang an anthem to Christ as God, and bound themselves by solemn oath not to commit any wicked deed, but to abstain from all fraud, theft, and adultery, never to break their word or deny of trust when called upon to honor it, after which it was a custom of theirs was to separate, and then meet again to partake of food, but food of an ordinary and innocent kind. This is the whole of their crimes.

What am I supposed to do to these people? Trajan actually wrote back and said, well, don't hunt down Christians. If someone is reported out as a Christian, you have to do something to punish them accordingly, but he said you don't have to actively persecute them. But we have a documentation here that there were people in the very early second century who believed there was someone named Christ.

They even believed he was a god and worshipped him as such. That's pretty soon after. You don't really have legends of fake people being treated as historical characters so soon after their we're talking about 70 years, 80 years after the crucifixion of Christ here.

It's fairly early. But what about Josephus? Now the documentary says that Josephus has been proven centuries ago to be a forgery. The fact is no one has ever proven that this passage in Josephus is a forgery though it is widely held to be.

Not all scholars agree. It is disputed. There are other passages in Josephus that are not disputed, but let's look at the disputed passage here.

The disputed passage in Josephus does sound suspiciously fake in some ways. Josephus was not a Christian. He was a Jewish historian.

But he wrote this in his book Antiquities, 1833. He said there arose about this time Jesus, a wise man if indeed we should call him a man. For he was a doer of marvelous deeds, a teacher of men who received the truth with pleasure.

He led away many Jews and also many of the Greeks. This man was the Christ. And when Pilate had condemned him to the cross those who had loved him at first did not cease.

For he appeared to them on the third day alive again the divine prophets having spoken these and thousands of other wonderful things about him. And even now the tribe of Christians so named after him has not died out. Now there are several things in this quote that make it seem like Josephus wouldn't say these things.

Like he says if indeed we should call him a man. He says a teacher of men who received the truth with pleasure. He said this man was the Christ.

And he said for he appeared to them on the third day alive again the divine prophets having spoken these and thousands of other wonderful things about him. How could a non-Christian writer say such things about Jesus? Well probably would not. And it's because of this primarily that many people say well this is a Christian interpolation into Josephus.

Josephus was not a Christian but Christians somehow got a hold of him and stuck this paragraph in about Jesus to try to verify that Jesus existed. Now that's not an impossible theory. Okay? I'm going to say it's not impossible.

We just don't know. It certainly has not been proven. It certainly is not true to say this has been proven to be a fraud or a forgery for hundreds of years.

It has never been proven to be any such. Some scholars say, you know, it has the look of an authentic passage except for some of these things. For example, Josephus if you read his works, has a very distinctive style of writing.

This paragraph does not depart from that style. It's very much the style of his historical writing. It just has these few things in it that are troublesome.

Like if we indeed should call him man. But maybe he meant that ironically. Maybe he's kind of mocking the Christians with this.

If we should indeed call him a man. Would our Christian friends allow us to call him a man? And what if in the copying of Josephus through the ages, a few phrases dropped out as often happens when ancient documents are copied. What if he originally said instead of those who receive a truth, he said something that looks almost identical in Greek.

Strange things. The Greek word for truth and the Greek word for strange things are almost identical. Suppose someone copied him wrong.

What if he said this was a teacher of men who received strange things with pleasure. That would not be particularly complimentary. Instead if this man was the Christ, what if

he had said this man was alleged to be the Christ or was the so-called Christ.

I'll show you there's a non-disputed passage in Josephus where he specifically refers to Jesus as the so-called Christ. He could have done so here and that could have dropped out in copying. Likewise, if there was a phrase like they alleged or they claimed, he could have said for they claimed he appeared to them on the third day alive and fulfilled what the prophet said.

That could have been in there. We don't know. Everything else about the passage sounds like the real Josephus.

We don't know whether they originally had any of these phrases or not. But there's some things in Josephus, by the way there's some things that don't sound very Christian, like a Christian writer, like why would they call him a wise man. That doesn't make him very distinctive.

Or speak of the Christians as the tribe of Christians named after him. There's no Christian literature where Christians refer to themselves as a tribe. I mean there are some very non-Christian features of the passage too.

It's a mystery. Is this passage in some form original to Josephus or not? We don't know. It is disputed.

It could be authentic with some changes or it might not be. However, there's another passage that is not disputed in Josephus, not by anyone reasonable anyway. A reference to James, Jesus' brother.

In Antiquities 10.9.1 Josephus said, So Ananias the high priest, or Ananis the high priest, assembled a council of judges and brought before it the brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ, whose name was James. That is the brother's name was James. Together with some others, and having accused them as lawbreakers, he delivered them over to be stoned.

It's obvious there's no attempt here to confirm that Jesus is the Christ. There's nothing particularly Christian about this passage. Jesus was the so-called Christ, as far as Josephus was concerned.

It at least confirms there was a man named Jesus who some people were calling the Christ who had a brother named James at this time. In the Bible, our Jesus had a brother named James. And yet this passage could not be drawn from Christian literature or from the Bible because the Bible doesn't tell us how James died.

This is extra biblical information. But it seems to be very much biblical characters. Then you've got another interesting quote in Josephus about John the Baptist.

It doesn't say anything about Jesus. And Josephus says, Now some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God as a punishment for what he had done against John, who was called the Baptist. For Herod had put him to death, though he was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both of justice toward one another and piety toward God, and so to come to baptism.

Now this is an independent reference to John the Baptist that agrees with everything the New Testament says about him. And by the way, Anna the Baptizer, who baptized Horace allegedly, doesn't even exist in the Horace legends, but John the Baptist really does exist in historical records. So we do have not much, but some.

I want to say, however, that the Gospels are not bad records themselves. We don't have anything like them about most famous people from antiquity. You know that the earliest biographies of Alexander the Great we have were written 600 years after he died? We don't have any eyewitness accounts of Alexander the Great, but his biographies are treated as authoritative in scholarly circles.

They don't doubt it, though they were written 600 years after the guy died. Now, centuries later, mythology about Alexander began to be introduced about him doing miracles and stuff, but that was long after. The actual biographies of him, written 600 years after his death, are considered to be historically accurate.

And yet we have four contemporary records of the life of Jesus. That's much better documentation for the life of Jesus than we have for the life of Alexander the Great or most ancient figures. Robert van Voorst, who's an expert in world religions, ancient Christianity and church history, and the study of New Testament Greek, in his book *Jesus Outside the New Testament, An Introduction to Ancient Evidence*, he wrote in the year 2000, the theory of Jesus' non-existence is now effectively dead as a scholarly question.

William Lane Craig wrote on this, he said, here we confront the very crucial question of the burden of proof. Should we assume that the Gospels are reliable unless they are proven unreliable? Or should we assume the Gospels are unreliable unless they are proven reliable? Are they innocent until proven guilty? Or guilty until proven innocent? Skeptical scholars almost always assume that the Gospels are guilty until proven innocent. That is, they assume that the Gospels are unreliable unless and until they are proven to be correct concerning some particular fact.

Which is true. I mean, we don't do that with other ancient records. We don't require every ancient historian, Herodotus and Thucydides, to be proven on every point before we assume they're true.

We assume they're telling the truth unless we find compelling reasons to disagree with them. Craig goes on to make five points. I'm going to run these really quickly.

These are five reasons why he says we ought to assume the Gospels are reliable until proven wrong. One, there was insufficient time for legendary influences to expunge the historical facts. We got the case of Alexander as something to consider.

The interval of time between the events themselves and recording of them in Gospels is too short to have allowed the memory of what had or had not actually happened to be erased. Here's the example of Alexander I just gave you. Historian A. N. Sherwin-White in his book *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* points out that the two earliest biographies of Alexander the Great were written, I was wrong, I said 600, it was 400 years after Alexander's death.

And yet classical historians still consider them to be trustworthy. The fabulous legends about Alexander did not develop until centuries after these two writers. According to Sherwin-White, even two generations is too short a time span to allow legendary tendencies to wipe out the hard core of historical facts.

Richard Bauckham, a very well respected professor of New Testament at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland said in his book *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* published two years ago, three years ago, he said the Gospels were written within living memory of the events they recount. Mark's Gospel is written well within the lifetime of many of the eyewitnesses, while the other three canonical Gospels were written in the period when the living eyewitnesses were becoming scarce, exactly at the point in time when their testimony would perish with them if it were not put into writing. This is highly significant fact entailed not by unusually early dating of the Gospels, but by the generally accepted dating.

We imagine sometimes of traditions passing through many minds and mouths before they reached the writers of the Gospels, but the period in question is actually that of a relatively for that period, long lifetime. One lifetime between the death of Jesus and the appearance of the Gospels. Not long enough for legends to develop like that.

William Lane Crave said, or again Paul, in his letters hands on information concerning Jesus about the teaching, his last supper, his betrayal, his crucifixion, his burial and his resurrection appearances. Paul's letters were written even before the Gospels and some of his information, for example, what he passes on in his first letter to the Corinthian church about the resurrection appearances has been dated to within five years after Jesus' death. It just becomes irresponsible to speak of legends in such cases.

Next point, the Gospels are not analogous to the folk tales or contemporary urban legends. Tales of those like Paul Bunyan or Pecos Bill or contemporary urban legends like *The Vanishing Hitchhiker* rarely concern actual historical individuals and are thus not analogous to the Gospel narratives. Third point, the Jewish transmission of sacred traditions was highly developed and reliable.

In an oral culture like that of the first century Palestine, the ability to memorize and retain large tracts of oral tradition was a highly prized and highly developed skill. From the earliest age, Jewish children in the home, elementary school, and the synagogue were taught to memorize faithfully sacred tradition. The disciples would have exercised similar care with the teaching of Jesus and would therefore not have any difficulty remembering such memorable things that they had witnessed with their own eyes.

Fourth, there were significant restraints on the embellishment of traditions about Jesus such as the presence of eyewitnesses and the apostles' supervision. That is, the eyewitnesses and the apostles supervising the message would restrain any embellishments in their lifetime from taking place if they were interested in the truth. We have reason to believe they were.

Since those who had seen and heard Jesus continued to live and the tradition about Jesus remained under the supervision of the apostles, these factors would act as a natural check on tendencies to elaborate the facts in a direction contrary to what that preserved by those who had known Jesus. Final point, the Gospel writers have a proven track record of historical reliability. And that is a fact.

Luke especially is a respected historian. He's been criticized by people who didn't know much until they discovered more. Luke throughout history has been vindicated again and again on points where critics have said he was not accurate.

Then later archaeological discoveries proved that he was. According to Professor Sherwin White, quote, for Acts, that's the book of Acts by Luke, the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming. Any attempt to reject its basic historicity, even in matters of detail, must now appear absurd.

The judgment of Sir William Ramsey, the world famous archaeologist, still stands. He said, quote, Luke is a historian of first rank. This author should be placed among the very greatest of the historians, unquote.

Given Luke's care and demonstrated reliability as well as his contact with the eyewitnesses within the first generation of the events, this author is trustworthy. These are the five reasons why William Lane Craig says we should consider the Gospels reliable unless they're proven false. They have never been proven false.

They've only been assumed false by people who didn't like their contents. That's not a very good way of deciding whether a historical document is reliable or not. Come back to the conclusion of Zeitgeist.

Christianity, along with all other theistic belief systems, is the fraud of the age. I can think of a bigger fraud. Zeitgeist is in every respect a fraud.

It professes to represent what Christianity teaches, where Christianity came from, what

pagan religions teach us, and it's wrong on all the points. And yet it argues as if it is an authoritative historical record. If there is a great fraud that we have had occasion to look at tonight, it is the movie Zeitgeist and the Jesus mythology school that it represents.

And certainly the Bible comes out of this smelling like a rose, to tell you the truth, compared to Zeitgeist, which comes out looking rather absurd and juvenile, which is exactly what it is. If you have not seen Zeitgeist, I really recommend that you see it now, knowing this. I don't know if I would have recommended that you see it without knowing some of the background, because, as I say, unless you know what the real facts are, it sounds pretty impressive.

Although a little hokey in some places, even if you don't know anything. But the truth of the matter is that the Gospels come out very well in the real study of the real facts. Now, I told you this is the reliability of the Gospels in light of modern media challenges.

This is only the first lecture. I'm going to have to take some others in successive visits here, two, three months at intervals or whatever. You don't have to come to any of them, of course, but I'll let you know they're going to be here.

I'm going to take on the challenge that the Da Vinci Code brings. I'm going to give you a lecture on that. I'm also going to take on the challenges that come from Bart Ehrman, the writer of Misquoting Jesus, the one who claimed that the Church changed the Gospels and the manuscripts.

He's not hard to refute, although he is quoted in all the media as the great expert on these subjects. I might even take something about the Jesus Seminar, but they're kind of old news now. But I do want to have at least two more, if not four more lectures, taking these various modern challenges, because you might say, well, I've never had any doubts about Christianity.

I don't need to hear this stuff. Yeah, but unless you kind of live in a bubble where no non-Christians come, you'll probably run into people who, if they haven't seen Zeitgeist, they've heard somewhere else about what Zeitgeist is. This is the rumble.

This is the rumor that's going around these days. I'm getting emails from all over the place, people saying, is this true? You'll probably hear from some people asking that question, too. So knowing something about it would not hurt.