

The Historicity of Jesus: 2022 Status of the Debate

Richard Carrier, Ph.D.

www.richardcarrier.info/Carrier-SBL2022

Most recent peer reviewed study dedicated to a defense of historicity:

- Shirley Jackson Case. *The Historicity of Jesus: A Criticism of the Contention that Jesus Never Lived* (University of Chicago Press: 1912; 2nd ed. 1923). [see Carrier 2014: 592–94]

Most recent peer reviewed studies dedicated to a critique of historicity:

- Thomas Brodie, *Beyond the Quest for the Historical Jesus: Memoir of a Discovery* (Sheffield Phoenix Press: 2012).
- Richard Carrier. *On the Historicity of Jesus: Why We Might Have Reason for Doubt* (Sheffield Phoenix Press: 2014).
- Raphael Lataster. *Questioning the Historicity of Jesus: Why a Philosophical Analysis Elucidates the Historical Discourse* (Brill: 2019).

Most recent “popular market” defenses of historicity (*ignoring above*):

- Bart Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist? The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth* (Harper: 2012). [see richardcarrier.info/archives/1794]
- Maurice Casey, *Jesus: Evidence and Argument or Mythicist Myths?* (T&T Clark: 2014). [see richardcarrier.info/archives/4282]

Negative academic reviews of Carrier 2014 (no comparable academic response to Brodie or Lataster):

- Christina Petterson in *Relegere* 5.2 (2015): 253–58. [see richardcarrier.info/archives/12038]

- Daniel Gullotta. “On Richard Carrier’s Doubts.” *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 15.2–3 (2017): 310–46. [see richardcarrier.info/archives/13573]
- Simon Gathercole. “The Historical and Human Existence of Jesus in Paul’s Letters.” *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 16.2–3 (2018): 183–212. [see richardcarrier.info/archives/15086]
- M. David Litwa. *How the Gospels Became History: Jesus and Mediterranean Myths* (Yale University Press: 2019): 22–45. [see richardcarrier.info/archives/16658]

Academic criticism of these responses:

- Philip Davies. “Did Jesus Exist?” *The Bible and Interpretation* (August 2012) [see bibleinterp.arizona.edu/opeds/dav368029]
- Raphael Lataster in a review of Carrier 2014 in the *Journal of Religious History* 38 (2014): 614–16.
- Justin Meggitt. “‘More Ingenious than Learned’? Examining the Quest for the Non-Historical Jesus.” *New Testament Studies* 65.4 (2019): 443–60.
- Richard Carrier & Raphael Lataster (presentations at the 2021 International eConference on the Historical Jesus, July 24–25 sponsored by the Global Center for Religious Research; see gcr.org/historicaljesusconference).

Experts (with relevant PhDs) agreeing Jesus might not have existed (admitting either plausibility, agnosticism, or doubt: see richardcarrier.info/archives/1794#22):

1. Hector Avalos. “Who Was the Historical Jesus?” *Ames Tribune* (2 March 2013).
2. Thomas Brodie (ibid.).
3. Richard Carrier (ibid.).
4. Zeba Crook (commentary in Facebook discussion; see <https://tinyurl.com/yckr8fzd> and <https://tinyurl.com/mry8p4rx>).
5. Philip Davies (ibid.; and personal correspondence with Carrier and Lataster).

6. Arthur Droge. “Jesus and Ned Lud[d]: What’s in a Name?” *CAESAR* 3.1 (2009): 23–25. [see <https://tinyurl.com/ycksk4mb>]
7. Tom Dykstra. “Ehrman and Brodie on Whether Jesus Existed: A Cautionary Tale about the State of Biblical Scholarship.” *Journal of the Orthodox Center for the Advancement of Biblical Studies* 8.1 (2015): 1–32.
8. Raphael Lataster (ibid.).
9. Dennis MacDonald (recorded discussion: see richardcarrier.info/archives/17824).
10. David Madison (public remarks at the GCRR 2021 International eConference on the Historical Jesus, July 24–25: see grr.org/historicaljesusconference).
11. Steve Mason. “Dr. Steve Mason Addresses Jesus Mythicism.” *Harmonic Atheist* (28 October 2020: timestamp 28:30: see <https://tinyurl.com/2p983h59>).
12. Justin Meggitt (ibid.).
13. Richard C. Miller. “Foreword.” *The Varieties of Jesus Mythicism: Did He Even Exist?*, ed. John Loftus & Robert M. Price (Hypatia Press 2021).
14. Kurt Noll. “Investigating Earliest Christianity without Jesus.” ‘*Is This Not the Carpenter?*’ *The Question of the Historicity of the Figure of Jesus*, eds. Thomas Thompson and Thomas Verenna (Equinox 2012): 233–66.
15. Emanuel Pfoh. “Jesus and the Mythic Mind: An Epistemological Problem.” *Is This Not the Carpenter?* ‘*The Question of the Historicity of the Figure of Jesus*, eds. Thomas Thompson & Thomas Verenna (Equinox 2012): 79–92.
16. Robert M. Price. *The Christ-Myth Theory and Its Problems* (American Atheist Press 2011).
17. Darren Slade (public remarks at the GCRR 2021 International eConference on the Historical Jesus, July 24–25: see grr.org/historicaljesusconference).
18. Francesca Stavrakopoulou (comments through her Twitter feed: see <https://tinyurl.com/2p889fvp>).
19. Thomas Thompson. *The Messiah Myth: The Near Eastern Roots of Jesus and David* (Basic Books 2011).

Defects of Responses to Date

[see richardcarrier.info/archives/1794 and *ibid.* [5730](#), [13352](#), [13541](#), [13812](#)]

- They do not address the arguments actually in Carrier 2014 or Lataster 2019.
- They make false claims about the arguments in same (straw man).
- They “respond” to statements in same but ignore the rebuttals already therein.
- They employ psychological fallacies (poisoning the well and ad hominem).

Examples:

- Gathercole: falsely claims “the only real solution for the mythicist is to regard [Paul’s statement that Jesus was] ‘born from a woman’ as an interpolation” (compare Carrier 2014: 575-82); ignores args. for Paul’s referencing “Brothers of the Lord” as cultic brethren (*Ibid.* 582–92), Jesus as Davidic (*Ibid.* 575–77), Eucharist (*Ibid.* 557–66), etc.
- Gullotta: falsely claims *OHJ* only considers the “Gospel” Jesus’s historicity; relies on MacDonald’s Homeric thesis; doesn’t count passages in Paul as evidence *for* historicity; and is “incompetent” because it does not address some argument (that in fact it addresses).

Needed Change of Behavior in the Field

- Actually read the peer reviewed monographs critiquing historicity.
- Do not misrepresent or ignore their arguments.
- Compare their actual contents with existing critiques and responses.
- Redress the deficiencies in the latter or acknowledge merits of the former.