Did Jesus Exist?
Probably Not

Richard Carrier, Ph.D
www.richardcarrier.info
First Order of Business

- **Consensus Untrustworthy:** Not valid when founded on logically fallacious methods (*Proving History*) and ignorance of key facts (*On the Historicity of Jesus*).

- **Ditto Mythicism:** I do not endorse nor will defend most mythicist arguments, many of which are amateur and often illogical or factually incorrect.

- **Presumptions Ought to Be Challenged:** Most originated with Christian scholars, and still adopted by secular scholars falsely assuming past work has been unbiased.
The Alternative Theory

- Jesus began as a celestial being (archangel), revealing truths to followers via revelations and hidden messages in scripture.

- Christianity began when this “being” revealed that he had tricked the Devil by becoming incarnate and being crucified by the Devil (in the region of heavens ruled by Devil).

- Thereby atoning for all of humanity's sins, so the End of the World could begin.

- Because they saw this promised in the scriptures: Daniel 9, Jeremiah 23 & 25, Isaiah 53, Zechariah 3 & 6.
The Divine Being Analogy

- **Islam:** Mohammed “hallucinates” conversations with the angel Gabriel and the Koran records the spoken teachings of Gabriel.

- **Mormonism:** Joseph Smith “hallucinates” conversations with the angel Moroni and seeing words on magical plates, and the Book of Mormon records what the latter two said.
What Happened

- Jesus was originally a celestial being like Gabriel or Moroni, and taught his followers in the same way.

- Then he was “Euhemerized” (stories created placing him on earth with other historical figures).

- Then started believing or selling those stories as true.

- Because (a) Euhemerization was common and (b) made it easier to control doctrine (inventing tradents to trump revelations).
Why Believe That?

- Because it's typically what happens (Jewish patriarchs, pagan savior gods, modern cargo cults).

- And our sequence of evidence corresponds to it...
Why Believe That?

1. Epistles only speak of a **pre-existent celestial being** and **revealed gospel**.

2. Gospels come later; wildly, deliberately **fictional**.  
   *(Yet all subsequent historicity claims based on them.)*

3. All other evidence from the first **eighty years** of Christianity's development conveniently not preserved *(not even in quotation or refutation).*

4. And other evidence **forged** in its place (dozens of Gospels, Acts, fake Epistles, doctored passages).
Personal Savior Deities: All the Rage

- They are all “savior gods”
- They are all the “son” of God (or “daughter”)
- They all undergo a “passion” (*patheôn*)
- They all obtain victory over death, which they share with their followers
- They all have stories about them set in human history on earth
- Yet none of them ever actually existed
Dying-and-Rising Gods

- **Romulus**: Roman state god, his death and resurrection celebrated in annual plays.
- **Osiris**: Egyptian god, those baptized into his death and resurrection are saved in the afterlife.
- **Zalmoxis**: Thracian god, his death and resurrection assures followers of eternal life.
Philo of Alexandria Tells Us...

Philo, *Confusion of Tongues* 62-63, 146-47; *On Dreams* 1.215; etc.

- There was a pre-Christian Jewish belief in a celestial being *actually named “Jesus”* who was...
- The firstborn son of God...
- The celestial “image of God”
- God’s agent of creation...
- And God’s celestial high priest.
Philo of Alexandria Tells Us...

- There was a pre-Christian Jewish belief in a celestial being actually named “Jesus” who was...
  - The firstborn son of God...
  - The celestial “image of God”
  - God’s agent of creation...
  - And God’s celestial high priest.

*Romans 8:29*
Philo of Alexandria Tells Us...

- There was a pre-Christian Jewish belief in a celestial being actually named “Jesus” who was...
  - The firstborn son of God...
  - The celestial “image of God”
  - God’s agent of creation...
  - And God’s celestial high priest.

Philo, *Confusion of Tongues* 62-63, 146-47; *On Dreams* 1.215; etc.

- Romans 8:29
- 2 Corinthians 4:4
Philo of Alexandria Tells Us...

Philo, *Confusion of Tongues* 62-63, 146-47; *On Dreams* 1.215; etc.

- There was a pre-Christian Jewish belief in a celestial being *actually named “Jesus”* who was...
- The firstborn son of God...
- The celestial “image of God”
- God’s agent of creation...
- And God’s celestial high priest.

*Romans 8:29*

*2 Corinthians 4:4*

*1 Corinthians 8:6*
Philo of Alexandria Tells Us...

There was a pre-Christian Jewish belief in a celestial being **actually named “Jesus”** who was...

- The firstborn son of God...
- The celestial “image of God”
- God’s agent of creation...
- And God’s celestial high priest.

Philo, *Confusion of Tongues* 62-63, 146-47; *On Dreams* 1.215; etc.

- Romans 8:29
- 2 Corinthians 4:4
- 1 Corinthians 8:6
- Hebrews 2:17, 4:14, ...
Philo of Alexandria Tells Us...

There was a pre-Christian Jewish belief in a celestial being actually named “Jesus” who was...

- The firstborn son of God...
- The celestial “image of God”
- God’s agent of creation...
- And God’s celestial high priest.

*Philippians 2:5-11*: Earliest known Christians believed this preexistent being descended, became incarnate and died, rose again, then appeared to select people to tell them this.

And God’s celestial high priest.

- Romans 8:29
- 2 Corinthians 4:4
- 1 Corinthians 8:6
- Hebrews 2:17, 4:14, ...
Philo of Alexandria Tells Us...

There was a pre-Christian Jewish belief in a celestial being actually named "Jesus" who was...

- The firstborn son of God...
- The celestial "image of God"
- God's agent of creation...
- And God's celestial high priest.

Philo, *Confusion of Tongues* 62-63, 146-47; *On Dreams* 1.215; etc.

On the Most Plausible Mythicist Theory: This incarnation, death, and burial took place in outer space just below the moon.

And God's celestial high priest.

- Romans 8:29
- 2 Corinthians 4:4
- 1 Corinthians 8:6
- Hebrews 2:17, 4:14, ...
Philo of Alexandria Tells Us...

Philo, *Confusion of Tongues* 62-63, 146-47; *On Dreams* 1.215; etc.

There was a pre-Christian Jewish belief in a celestial being actually named "Jesus" who was the firstborn son of God, the celestial "image of God," God's agent of creation, and God's celestial high priest.

The same was taught of Osiris: public stories put him on earth, but private stories had his death and resurrection occur in outer space just below the moon.

- Romans 8:29
- 2 Corinthians 4:4
- 1 Corinthians 8:6
- Hebrews 2:17, 4:14, ...
Philo of Alexandria Tells Us...

Philo, *Confusion of Tongues* 62-63, 146-47; *On Dreams* 1.215; etc.

Precedents in the Jewish belief system: e.g. Adam was believed to have been buried in outer space (*Revelation of Moses*).

- Romans 8:29
- 2 Corinthians 4:4
- 1 Corinthians 8:6
- Hebrews 2:17, 4:14, ...
The Ascension of Isaiah

- Late 1st / early 2nd century “Gospel”
- Prophet Isaiah receives a vision
- Earliest (?) redaction lacks visit to earth
- Jesus is crucified by Satan in outer space
“We did not follow cleverly devised myths ... we were eyewitnesses of his majesty!”

Then immediately forges an eyewitness account of meeting Jesus on earth.

To answer otherwise unknown Christians who were claiming such a Jesus was a “cleverly devised myth” (2 Peter 2:1).
How Jesus Communicated

- Jesus began as a **celestial being** *(archangel)*, revealing truths to followers via **revelations** and **hidden messages** in scripture.

- This is stated several times in the Epistles.

- No references in the Epistles to Jesus preaching *(other than from heaven)*, being a preacher, having a ministry, or choosing or having disciples, or communicating by any means other than revelation and scripture.

- This is completely reversed in the Gospels.
How Jesus Communicated

- **Romans 16:25-26:** “…the preaching of Jesus Christ [is] according to **revelation** of the mystery kept silent for all ages, but now manifested through the **scriptures**…”

- **Romans 10:14-17:** “How shall they call on him if they haven’t believed in him? And how shall they believe in him if they haven’t heard him? And how shall they hear [him] without a preacher? And how shall any preach, unless they are sent [as Apostles]?”

- **1 Corinthians 9:1:** “Am I not an Apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?”

- **2 Corinthians 12:1-9:** Paul speaks of having many revelations from the celestial Jesus and even relays a two-way conversation he had with him.
According to Paul

- **Scripture** and **Revelation** are the only sources of information Paul ever mentions anyone having.

- The Jesus he knows and refers to and speaks to is always in outer space.

- Paul never clearly places Jesus on earth or connects him to human history.
Galatians 1:11-12: “brothers, the gospel I preached does not come from man. Neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through a revelation of Jesus Christ.”

1 Corinthians 15:1-8: “brothers, the gospel I preached ... [is] what I also received: that according to the scriptures Christ died for our sins, and that he was buried, and that according to the scriptures he was raised on the third day, and that he appeared to Cephas [etc.] ... and at last he appeared to me as well.”

1 Corinthians 11:23: “I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that on the night he was handed over the Lord took bread...and said...[etc.]”
Paul’s (Authentic) Letters

- **Galatians 1:11-12:** “brothers, the gospel I preached does not come from man. Neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through a revelation of Jesus Christ.”

- **1 Corinthians 15:1-8:** “brothers, the gospel I preached ... [is] what I also received: that according to the scriptures Christ died for our sins, and that he was buried, and that according to the scriptures he was raised on the third day, and that he appeared to Cephas [etc.] ... and at last he appeared to me as well.”

- **1 Corinthians 11:23:** “I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that on the night he was handed over the Lord took bread...and said...[etc.]”

Note that Jesus is not said to have appeared before his death. People only see him after his death.
Galatians 1:11-12: “brothers, the gospel I preached does not come from man. Neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through a revelation of Jesus Christ.”

1 Corinthians 15:1-8: “brothers, the gospel I preached ... [is] what I also received: that according to the scriptures Christ died for our sins, and that he was buried, and that according to the scriptures he was raised on the third day, and that he appeared to Cephas [etc.] ... and at last he appeared to me as well.”

1 Corinthians 11:23: “I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that on the night he was handed over the Lord took bread...and said...[etc.]”
Galatians 1:11-12: “brothers, the **gospel I preached** does not come from man. Neither did I **receive** it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through a **revelation** of Jesus Christ.”

1 Corinthians 15:1-8: “brothers, the **gospel I preached** ... [is] what I also **received**: that **according to the scriptures** Christ died for our sins, and that he was buried, and that **according to the scriptures** he was raised on the third day, and that he **appeared** to Cephas [etc.] ... and at last he appeared to me as well.”

1 Corinthians 11:23: “I **received from the Lord** what I also delivered to you, that on the night he was handed over the Lord took bread...and said...[etc.]”
Galatians 1:11-12: “brothers, the **gospel I preached** does not come from man. Neither did I **receive** it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through a **revelation** of Jesus Christ.”

1 Corinthians 15:1-8: “brothers, the **gospel I preached** ... [is] what I also **received**: that **according to the scriptures** Christ died for our sins, and that he was buried, and that **according to the scriptures** he was raised on the third day, and that he **appeared** to Cephas [etc.] ... and at last he appeared to me as well.”

1 Corinthians 11:23: “I **received from the Lord** what I also delivered to you, that on the night he was handed over the Lord took bread...and said...[etc.]”
Galatians 1:11-12: "brothers, the gospel I preached does not come from man. Neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through a revelation of Jesus Christ."

1 Corinthians 15:1-8: "brothers, the gospel I preached...[is] what I also received: that according to the scriptures Christ died for our sins, and that he was buried, and that according to the scriptures he was raised on the third day, and that he appeared to Cephas [etc.] ... and at last he appeared to me as well.”

1 Corinthians 11:23: “I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that on the night he was handed over the Lord took bread...and said...[etc.]”

This means Paul hallucinated the original supper, and thus received teachings from the dead Jesus (even quotes him, just as he does in 2 Corinthians 12).
Galatians 1:11-12: “brothers, the gospel I preached does not come from man. Neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through a revelation of Jesus Christ.”

1 Corinthians 15:1-8: “brothers, the gospel I preached ... [is] what I also received: that according to the scriptures Christ died for our sins, and that he was buried, and that according to the scriptures he was raised on the third day, and that he appeared to Cephas [etc.] ... and at last he appeared to me as well.”

1 Corinthians 11:23: “I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that on the night he was handed over the Lord took bread...and said...[etc.]”
Does Paul Mention Earthly Family?

- **Brothers of the Lord?** Means “baptized Christians”

- **Born (= Made) of the Sperm of David:** Means divine manufacture, not descent.

- **Born (= Made) of a Woman:** Paul says this is an allegory (*Gal. 4*).
The Gospels come decades after fact and are the first we hear of an earthly story for Jesus.

The Gospels are wildly fictitious in their content and structure.

Every story has discernible allegorical or propagandistic intent.

The first (Mark) looks like an extended metaparable (outsiders are told a story, while insiders are told what it really means). [Mark 4:11-12]
Gospels as Parables

- The Power of Parable
  - John Dominic Crossan
  - How Fiction by Jesus Became Fiction about Jesus

- Proving History
  - Richard C. Carrier
  - Bayes’s Theorem and the Quest for the Historical Jesus

- Gospel Fictions
  - Randel Helms
Gospels as Parables

Are there exceptions?
Everything else is either **not independent** (they just echo the Gospels or what Christians said the Gospels say)...

Or is **fabricated** (e.g. the Infancy Gospels, Jesus’ Letter to Abgar, the forged epistles in the NT and beyond)
The Roswell Analogy

❖ What Really Happened: A guy found some sticks and tinfoil in the desert.

❖ What Was Said to Have Happened: It was debris from an alien spacecraft.

❖ What Was Said to Have Happened within just Thirty Years: An entire flying saucer was recovered, complete with alien bodies that were autopsied by the government.
The Roswell Analogy

- The “tinfoil in the desert” would be analogous to the “revelations of the archangel named Jesus”

- And the “flying saucer and alien bodies” would be analogous to the “historical Jesus of Galilee.”

- Imagine if we only had the stories written by the Roswell believers from thirty years later (and information derived from them), and nothing else...

- We would not know about the tinfoil. All we would have are multiple witnesses and sources reporting a flying saucer recovery and alien body autopsy.

- Neither of which ever existed.
First Order of Business

Dr. Crook is right: We agree on far more than we disagree. And I agree with most of his opening statement.
The Challenge

- **Gospel Trajectory?** Dr. Crook claims Jesus starts out as an ordinary historical man and becomes mythical over time.

- **Pauline Attestation?** Dr. Crook claims Paul says Jesus had a mother and brothers, therefore he was historical.
Dr. Crook is wrong that only by the time we get to John is “Jesus there at the start of creation.” That view is already in Paul, decades before even Mark wrote his Gospel.

So the trajectory Dr. Crook describes isn’t there. Mark mythologizes a celestial being into an earthly man in the same way historical biographies historicized other celestial beings: Osiris, Romulus, even Zeus & Uranus.

Philippians 2:5-11: “Christ Jesus, existing in the form of god, did not consider equality with God something to be seized, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yes, the death of the cross.”
1 Corinthians 8:6: “to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through him” (cf. Col. 1:12-20; Heb. 1:1-4, 2:10).

1 Corinthians 10:4: Paul says Christ was present in the time of Moses.

Romans 8:29: “His Son” was “the firstborn” (thus, as per Philo, preceding even Adam).

Romans 8:3: “God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful man” (cf. Rom. 1:3, Gal. 4:4).
The mythologizing that ensued after Mark was historicizing, making Jesus a more grandiose earthly figure, with even firmer claims to eyewitness evidence of his earthly existence. Compare Matthew, Luke, and John on the resurrection. Mark, meanwhile, is creating literary fictions for allegorical purposes. For example: his empty tomb account is rife with scriptural allusions about the meaning of the resurrection and the gospel that don’t depend on the story being true.
Gospel Trajectory?

- Dr. Crook's examples are only of later Gospels not liking the earlier Gospels and changing them. **They are not evidence that they had any knowledge of a historical Jesus.** Or that Mark did.

- **e.g. Baptism by John is fiction** (*Proving History*, pp. 145-48):
  - (1) Mark's story is a literary model for Christian baptism (being cleansed of sin and then being adopted as God’s son).
  - (2) that also co-opts the authority of John (by having him declare Jesus his successor and superior).
  - (3) only when Jesus was fully historicized (**and this story then read literally**) did this create a problem that later authors had to fix.
  - (4) none of their changes reflect any knowledge of a historical Jesus.
Earthly Parents?

- Born (= Made) of a Woman: in context (Gal. 4) this is allegorical, explaining we are born of the same woman (the slavegirl = the corrupt world subject to the Torah law) but thanks to Jesus we will be reborn of another woman (the freewoman = the celestial world)
**Born or Made?**

- **Romans 1:3 and Galatians 4:4:** Paul uses *genomenos* (from *ginomai*), “to happen, become, be made.”

- Paul never uses that word of a human birth, despite using it hundreds of times (typically to mean ‘being’ or ‘becoming’).

- His preferred word for being born is *gennaô* (Rom. 9:11 and Gal. 4:23, 29, yet notably not 4:4).
1 Corinthians 15:45: Paul says Adam “was made” (same word). Not a reference to being born but to being constructed directly by God.

Likewise in 1 Corinthians 15:37: Paul uses same word of our future resurrection body, which is also not born but directly manufactured by God (2 Cor. 5:1-5).

Romans 1:3 and Galatians 4:4: Same implication.
Brothers of the Lord

- Jesus is “the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8.29) because all baptized Christians are Brothers of the Lord (by adoption: Romans 8:15-29; Galatians 3:26-29; etc.).

- 1 Corinthians 9 and Galatians 1: Paul always uses the full phrase “Brothers of the Lord” instead of just “Brothers” when speaking of non-apostolic Christians and Apostles in the same sentence.

- 1 Cor. 9: Paul means that if even non-apostolic Christians on church business have a right to church support for a wife, so should Paul, who outranked them.

- Paul never otherwise refers to Jesus having biological brothers and never feels any need to distinguish between the Lord’s biological and cultic brothers.
James the Apostle?

- **Galatians 1:** “I did not go to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me … [until] after three years I went … to visit Cephas … **but another of the apostles saw I none, except James the Lord’s brother.**”

- **L. Paul Trudinger** (*Novum Testamentum* vol. 17, July 1975): “this would certainly be an odd way for Paul to say that he met only two apostles, Peter and James.”
The Greek actually says: “other than the apostles I saw only James,” meaning this James was not an apostle. Christian presumption has overlooked this.

Ordinarily, to say you saw “no other apostle” you would write heteron ton apostolon ouk (compare Rom. 7.23; 13.9; etc.) or oudena heteron tōn apostolōn (as Paul usually does: e.g. 1 Cor. 1.14; 2.8; 9.15; etc.) or things similar.

But Paul instead chose the unusual (and for Paul, unprecedented) construction heteron tōn apostolōn. Without oudeis, the word heteron plus the genitive in this fashion usually means “other than,” rather than “another of.”

Assumptions Underly Every Rebuttal

Those Assumptions Originated with Christians
Gospel Trajectory?

- **Lack of a virgin birth in Mark:** Mark had no use for a birth narrative for his missionary allegory. Only historicists had need of it.

- **Mark 3:21:** Mark created a story as a model for how Christian were treated (*accused of being possessed by demons*) using Jesus as a model for how to respond (hence his speech: **3:23-30**). Only when taken literally did elements of this fiction become a problem.

- The **entirety** of Mark 3 is a series of responses to typical things Christian missionaries faced.

- Paul never once mentions Jesus ever being an exorcist or a healer. That is Mark’s invention (*or that of a previous lost Gospel*).

- Mark is using Jesus as a model for Christian missionaries to use, who were healers and exorcists. *That's what myths were for.*
Gospel Trajectory?

Mark 1:1: That copyists fought over whether to call Jesus the “son of God” in Mark is moot. Paul already says he was the Son of God—and that he even existed as such before his incarnation. So the trajectory is the other way around: Mark is downplaying the gospel of a celestial Son preached for decades before him, in order to create an allegorical fiction rather than a literal one.

1 Timothy is a second century forgery and Luke 2:40-43 is an obviously fictional story. Forgeries and fictions have no value as evidence here.
Gospel Trajectory?

- **Mark 1:32-34**: Obviously fictional story. There are no demons, so Jesus can’t have ever “really” been forbidding them to speak. Mark is inventing that. Later authors then changed his fiction.

- **John 10:18**: That Jesus could raise himself is an example of a historicist wanting to magnify the fiction. It does not indicate any real knowledge of a historical Jesus. The celestial Jesus was always raised by God (Philippians 2). It is only later historicists like John who had a problem with that.
Gospel Trajectory?

- **Mark 11:13**: Obviously fictional story.
- People can’t whither fig trees.
- Nor would any real person curse one for not bearing figs out of season.
- The entire story is an allegory for God’s abandonment of the temple (the fig tree).
- **R.G. Hamerton-Kelly, "Sacred Violence and the Messiah"**
Inclusio

- The dying twelve year old girl
- The woman bleeding twelve years
- The dying twelve year old girl

- Jesus and the cursed fig tree
- Jesus clears the temple
- Jesus and the cursed fig tree
Gospel Trajectory?

- **Mark 8:23-25:** Mark is constructing a fictional narrative based on the miracles of Moses.

- The healed man sees the people as trees just as Moses summoned a tree to heal the people (Ex. 15: tree goes in water to fix it = water (*spit*) goes on blindness to fix it = both stories feature seeing a tree).

- **The story is obvious fiction:** people who are actually blind can't be healed this way, and people psychosomatically blind don't see people as trees on the way to being "cured."
freethoughtblogs.com / carrier / archives /

- Ehrman :: 1794
- Casey :: 4282
- Bermejo-Rubio :: 5085
- Goodacre :: 2839
- Crossan & MacDonald :: 2669
- Akin & Horn :: 4573