

Skepticism about Jesus and the Gospels

1. The Theory of the “Anonymous” Gospels
2. The “Telephone Game”
3. Jesus never claimed to be God; he is only divine in John (not in Matthew, Mark, or Luke)

1. Were the Gospels Anonymous?**Internal Evidence: The Greek Manuscripts**

1. Problems with the Theory of the Anonymous Gospels
 - a. No Anonymous Manuscripts of the Gospels: They don't Exist!
 - b. The Theory of the Anonymous Gospels is Incredible
 - c. Why (Falsely) attribute Mark and Luke to Non-Eyewitnesses?
2. The Greek Manuscripts: totally *Unanimous* in attributing the Four Gospels to
 - a. *Matthaios* = Matthew, tax-collector and one of Twelve apostles (Matt 9:9; 10:1-4)
 - b. *Markus* = Mark, companion of Paul and scribe of Peter (Acts 15:36-40; 1 Pet 5:12-13)
 - c. *Loukas* = Luke, Gentile physician and companion of Paul (Philem 23-23; Col 4:10-11)
 - d. *Iōannēs* = John, the Beloved Disciple, fisherman, one of the Twelve (John 21:20-25)

External Evidence: the Early Church Fathers

Irenaeus: Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome... After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter. Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him. Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon His breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia. (*Against Heresies*, 3.1)

What about the “Lost Gospels”?

When this boy Jesus was five years... he gathered together into pools the water that flowed by, and made it at once clean. . . . But the son of Annas the scribe was standing there... and he took a branch of willow and dispersed the water which Jesus had gathered together. When Jesus saw what he had done he was enraged and said to him: “You insolent, godless dunderhead, what harm did the pools and the water do to you? See, now you shall also wither like a tree...” And immediately the lad withered up completely. . . . After this, [Jesus] again went through the village, and a lad ran and knocked against his shoulder. Jesus was exasperated and said to him: “You shall not go further on your way,” and the child immediately fell down and died. (*Infancy Gospel of Thomas* 2.1, 3.1-3, 4.1; trans. W. Schneemelcher)

Are the Gospels Historical Biographies?

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us, just as they were delivered to us by *those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses* and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, *that you may know the truth* concerning the things of which you have been informed. (Luke 1:1-4)

This is the disciple who is bearing witness to these things, and who has written these things; and we know that his testimony is true. But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. (John 21:24-25; cf. John 19:35)

2. Did Jesus Claim to Be God?

1. Jesus: the “Kingdom of God” and the “Son of Man”

I [Daniel] saw in my vision by night... [F]our great beasts came up out of the sea... Behold, with the clouds of heaven there came *one like a son of man*... And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; *his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.* (Daniel 7:1, 9, 13-14)

<i>The Prophecy of the Son of Man (Daniel 7)</i>			
<i>Daniel's Dream</i>	<i>Angel's Interp.</i>	<i>Five Empires</i>	<i>Dates</i>
1. Lion	1st king	Babylonian	6th century BC
2. Bear	2nd king	Medo-Persian	5th century BC
3. Leopard	3rd king	Greek	4th century BC
4. Fourth beast	4th king	Roman	1st century BC
5. Son of Man	5th king	Kingdom of God	1st century AD?

Daniel Boyarin: What this text [Daniel 7] projects is a *second divine figure*... a God who looks like a human being... who is now called “Son of Man...” (*The Jewish Gospels* [New Press, 2012], pp. 32-33)

2. Jesus Walks on Water: “I AM”

And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. *He meant to pass by them*, but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out; for they all saw him, and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, “Take heart, *I am* (Greek *egō eimi*); have no fear.” And he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded... (Mark 6:45-52)

God Reveals His Name to Moses: “I AM”

Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “*I AM WHO I AM.*” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘*I AM* (Greek *egō eimi*) has sent me to you.’” (Exodus 3:13-14)

God “Passes By” Moses and Elijah on Mount Sinai

[The LORD said to Moses:] “I will make all my goodness *pass before you*, and *will proclaim before you my name ‘The LORD’*... While my glory *passes by* I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have *passed by*...” (Exodus 33:19, 22)

[God said to Elijah:] “Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD.” And behold, *the LORD passed by*... (1 Kings 19:11)

3. The Trial of Jesus: Crucified for Blasphemy

Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” And Jesus said, “*I am; and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.*” And the high priest tore his garments, and said, “Why do we still need witnesses? *You have heard his blasphemy.* What is your decision?” And they all condemned him as deserving death. (Mark 14:55-64; cf. Daniel 7:13-14; Psalm 110:1-4; John 19:5-7)

<i>The Prophecy of the Messiah's Death (Daniel 9)</i>		
<i>Daniel's Prophecy</i>	<i>Historical Events</i>	<i>Dates</i>
Word to restore Jerusalem	Artaxerxes Decree: rebuild the Temple	ca. 457 BC
Seventy weeks of years	70 X 7 Years = 490 Years	AD 457–33
“Messiah” will be “cut off”	Jesus is crucified	ca. AD 33
“City and sanctuary” destroyed	Jerusalem Temple destroyed	AD 70

3. Why Believe in the Resurrection?

Why Did the First Christians Believe Jesus Was Raised?

1. The Empty Tomb (Matt 28:1-8; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-10)
2. Appearances of Risen Jesus (Mathew 28; Luke 24; John 20-21; 1 Cor 15)
3. Fulfillment of Scripture (1 Cor 15:3-4; Luke 24:45; John 20:8-9)

The Sign of Jonah

“An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign; but *no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.* The men of Nineveh will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, *something greater than Jonah is here.*” (Matthew 12:38-41)

Is Jonah Alive For Three Days?

And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish, saying, “I called to the Lord, out of my distress, and he answered me; *out of the belly of Sheol I cried... I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me for ever; yet you brought up my life from the Pit,* O Lord my God. When *my soul fainted within me,* I remembered the LORD; and my prayer came to thee, into thy holy temple.” And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land. Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, “*Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.*” (Jonah 1:17-3:1)

The Church Fathers: The Miraculous Conversion of the Pagan World

Behold how today, yes, in our own times, our eyes see not only Egyptians, but every race of men who used to be idolaters . . . released from the errors of polytheism and the demons, and calling on the God of the prophets! . . . *Yes, in our own time the knowledge of the Omnipotent God shines forth and sets a seal of certainty on the forecasts of the prophets. You see this actually going on, you no longer only expect to hear of it, and if you ask the moment when the change began, for all your inquiry you will receive no other answer but the moment of the appearance of the Savior.* . . . And who would not be struck by the extraordinary change—that men who for ages have paid divine honor to wood and stone and demons, wild beasts that feed on human flesh, poisonous reptiles, animals of every kinds, repulsive monsters, fire and earth, and the lifeless elements of the universe should after our Savior’s coming pray to the Most High God, Creator of Heaven and earth, the actual Lord of the prophets, and the God of Abraham and his forefathers? (Eusebius of Caesarea, *The Proof of the Gospel*, 1.6.20–21)