**Why the Resurrection Matters** April 8, 2018

We’ve just celebrated Easter.

We looked intently at the beautiful terrible cross of Jesus, and his beautiful empty tomb.

The two go together; you cannot separate them.

Together they tell the good news of salvation which was provided for us by God through Jesus.

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

The word gospel means good news.

The word preach means to announce, to tell.

What was the the good news Paul announced?

That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; that he was buried;

that he was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures.

The Scriptures had foretold…what would happen to the Christ, the Messiah.

What had been foretold had been seen... by eyewitnesses:

who had seen him die;

seen him be buried.

The fact that Jesus died and was buried, while it is news, is not news we’ve never heard before.

Death happens to everyone.

But the news about Jesus is not just that he died and was buried.

Three days after he died he rose from the dead.

Now that is news!

It isn’t that Jesus lives on in the memories of his followers, or in their hearts.

That is something we often hear said at a celebration of life service.

Jesus physically lives.

And the evidence of his resurrection is compelling.

Paul provided for the Corinthians a list of people who saw Jesus after his resurrection: Peter, and the Twelve, and more than 500 (most of whom were still alive at the time of writing), and James, and last of all himself.

Five hundred and fifteen eyewitnesses saw and interacted with the resurrected Jesus in twelve different recorded incidents.

Lee Strobel says: *In 1990 archaeologists in Jerusalem uncovered the burial grounds of Caiaphas, Jesus' chief accuser. But nobody has ever uncovered the body of Jesus Christ.*

*History tells us Jesus' body was laid to rest in a tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea, and that the tomb was sealed. A heavy boulder was rolled in front of the opening, and it was guarded by elite Roman guards.*

*But on the third day, some women discovered Jesus’ tomb was empty. The fact that the Bible says women discovered the tomb empty lends even more credibility to these accounts, because women had low status in Jewish society at that time.*

*If Jesus’ disciples were fabricating this story, they would have claimed it was men who discovered the empty tomb because their testimony would have been more credible in that culture. This is one more indication that the writers were committed to recording exactly what took place, even though that bit of historical truth didn't help their case.*

*The religious leaders themselves believed the tomb was empty. Why else would they have bribed the guards who had guarded the tomb to say the disciples stole the body while they were asleep...????*

*Think about it! If the guards were sleeping, how did they know it was the disciples of Jesus who stole the body?*

*And even if a case could be made that the disciples stole the body, why did all of them die for a lie? If theirs had been a conspiracy, certainly one of them would have broken ranks under the pain of torture and told the truth. But it never happened.*

*History's unanimous testimony is that on Easter morning the tomb was empty.*

http://www.preachingtoday.com/sermons/sermons/2010/july/thetruthabouttheressurrection.html

There is one more question, regarding Easter, that we need to ask.

Coffee/Question:

Why is it so important that Jesus was bodily raised from the dead?

I want to list for you four reasons why it matters that Jesus rose from the dead.

An article written by Matthew Payne has helped me in my thinking about this theme.

**1. The resurrection proves God is just and Jesus is holy**

In Genesis 18:25, Abraham said to God, in conversation with him about the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, “Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

How did Abraham know this about God?

Because God had revealed this truth about himself in his dealings with humankind – ie. the flood.

When the religious leaders brought Jesus to Pilate early in the morning they said about Jesus – “If he were not a criminal we would not have brought him to you.”

In the eyes of the religious leaders Jesus was deserving of a criminal’s death.

When Pilate eventually signed the order, his actions confirmed that he agreed.

If Jesus had not rose from the dead then it would have appeared that God, the Judge of the earth, also agreed with them, since God himself had said, “anyone who hangs on a tree” is under his curse. [Deuteronomy 21:23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut%2021.23) and [Galatians 3:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%203.13)

If Jesus had remained dead, then he would have been just like the rest of us – who die because of our sin.

But look at what had been foretold in Psalm 16:10.

God reversed the unjust sentence pronounced upon Jesus.

What this means is astounding!!!

The fact that God raised Jesus from the dead is the proof that Jesus’ life was without flaw – that Jesus was not a criminal but that he was holy, and that he truly had died in our place.

**2. Because Jesus lives he is Lord**

The most basic confession made by those who follow Jesus is that ‘he is Lord.’

But what does that mean?

One of the men who was not present when Jesus first appeared to his followers was Thomas. When the rest told him they had seen Jesus, he refused to believe.

Thomas said, *“Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side (where the spear pierced), I will not believe.”* John 20:25

When Jesus next appeared, Thomas was present.

Jesus invited Thomas to do… what Thomas had insisted would have to happen if he were to believe. Do you know what Thomas did?

Upon seeing Jesus alive, in the flesh, Thomas said, *“My* ***LORD*** *and my God.”*

John 20:28

When Peter finished speaking to thousands of people on the day of Pentecost, this was his conclusion: *“Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both* ***Lord*** *and Messiah.”* Acts 2:36

What action did God take that demonstrated Jesus was Lord?

He raised him from the dead.

A hymn of the early church is found in Philippians 2:

*God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that* ***Jesus Christ is Lord****, to the glory of God the Father.* Philippians 2:9-11

Look at who John saw and heard when he was on the island of Patmos.

Revelation 1:10-18.

This confession, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ is utter nonsense without the resurrection.

A dead man cannot be in charge of the universe!!!

**3. The resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of our faith and hope**

Look at 1 Corinthians 15:14-19 – if Christ is not raised…

1 Corinthians 15:14

- preaching and faith is useless

The word “useless” is a strong word. It means of no value; of no benefit.

If Jesus doesn’t physically live, you should go home, right now.

1 Corinthians 15:15

- Jesus followers are “false witnesses.”

It means we are frauds; liars; deceivers.

1 Corinthians 15:17

- our faith is futile and we are still slaves to sin

Futile is a strong word, meaning “pointless, worthless, unreliable.”

If Jesus is dead, then Christianity is not the solution to humanity’s sin problem.

All we have is our own self-will to effect any kind of change.

1 Corinthians 15:18-19

- we are to be pitied because we are idiots for believing a lie.

If Jesus is not raised from the dead, we should do what Paul counsels in v.32.

But because he lives… we have hope. Hope of what?

Look at v.20-26.

- Jesus is the first-fruits – all will be raised

- he is the second Adam, reversing the curse of the first Adam

- Jesus is the Victor – he will make everything new

- history will have a conclusion

- Jesus will kill death

**4. Because Jesus lives he intercedes for those who put their trust in him**

Hebrews 7:25: *Therefore, he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.*

Right now... Jesus is physically alive in his Father’s home.

Jesus always... is in... his Father’s presence.

He is always... aware of what is happening to his followers.

And as our Savior, he always... intercedes for us.

That is, Jesus speaks to God the Father on our behalf.

We are never forgotten; overlooked; in a situation too great for him.

What does Jesus ask the Father to do for us?

Look again at the verse - the answer is implied.

The focus of Jesus’ intercession is the completion of the salvation begun in us.

Philippians 1:6

If Jesus isn’t alive... then he can’t intercede for us.

And if Jesus can’t intercede... he can’t save us.

But because Jesus rose from the dead; because he lives, he will save us…body, soul and spirit. <https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/dont-just-prove-resurrection-talk-matters/>

Let’s recap.

Why is the resurrection important? Four things!

**1. The resurrection proves God is just and Jesus is holy**

**2. Because Jesus lives he is Lord**

**3. The resurrection of Jesus is the basis of our faith and hope**

**4. Because Jesus lives he intercedes for those who put their hope in him**

What is our take-away?

1 Corinthians 15:58

* Stand firm - hold your ground – this is not just a suggestion; the one who helps us has defeated death and is the living One

There are situations before you that are challenging – hold our ground; don’t give up.

* Let nothing move you - what or who could be greater than the risen Jesus?

He faced and overcame our greatest threat.

All other threats are put in perspective by this.

* Always… - not sometimes; not most of the time, but always. This is the posture of our life
* give yourselves… - it is a choice you get to make; not a forced choice; but one made with gratitude. The beauty of the new heaven and the new earth will be that all there have chosen to love God…willingly
* fully… - not half-heartedly, but with passion – all in
* to the work of the Lord - to what Jesus is doing in this world

We were created to find satisfaction in work. What was lost is given back to us in Jesus.

Why would we always give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord?

Because we know that what we do is not in vain.

How do we know this?

Because of what this chapter, 1 Corinthians 15, has talked about.

Jesus rose from the dead – he lives!

This is not a fairy tale; nor wishful thinking.

This is the reality that now defines how you and I live.

Jesus defeated death. We can therefore be confident that Jesus is capable of killing off death completely, and we have his promise that he will do so.

‘Jesus died on the cross to take away our sins’ rolls off the tongue easily in evangelical circles. But ‘he rose to conquer death’ is not so common. It should be.

**4. The resurrection of Jesus began the last days**

Hebrews 1:1-2a*:*

*In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways,  but in* ***these last days****he has spoken to us by his Son...*

Acts 17:31: *“For [the Father] has set* ***a day*** *when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”*

1 Peter 4:7: *The end of all things is near.*

James 5:8: *The Lord’s coming is near.*

The resurrection of Jesus is the proof that the brokenness of this world will not continue forever.

In Jesus, the solution to humanity’s sin problem was provided.

And on the last day God’s justice will

The last days are days of opportunity - opportunity to repent – to change one’s mind about who Jesus is and to turn one’s life towards him.

But the last days will come to an end with a final day.

On a day; known only to him; on a day already chosen, the Father has appointed Jesus to act as his judge.

As we’ve already seen, when the Father raised Jesus to life, he reversed the unjust sentence of Pilate.

On the final day, through Jesus, on a cosmic scale, all will be justly judged.

every act of injustice will be addressed, everything will be made right, and the source of injustice - sin and death - will forever be removed to a place where it can no longer influence.

The certainty of Jesus’ return, and the fact that all will be accountable to him for what they have done with their lives, is meant to be a wake-up call for the world of humanity.

For the followers of Jesus, his return is our hope.

When we put our trust in him we are saved from the penalty of our sin.

As we follow him, we are being saved from the power of sin.

And on the day Jesus returns, we will be saved from the presence of sin.

On that day, what he began in us will be completed.

To begin to answer that question, we need to be aware of the narrative being told by our secular culture.

The claims circulating on the internet is that Easter was a pagan festival that Christianity took over.

It is advocated that there were many ancient stories of saviors, like Inanna/Ishtar, Horus, Mithras, Dionysus… “gods” who lived and did amazing things, and then died and lived again.

The assertion made is that the story Jesus is in the same genre of these other ancient deities.

Myths are understood to be stories that were exaggerated or fictitious.

But they were told and passed on to give hope and/or to explain reality.

The book of Ecclesiastes, 3:11, tells us that God “has set eternity in the human heart.” This is why humans intuitively know we are meant to live forever.

And the fact that we don’t; that we die, impresses upon all humanity that something is broken with the world, and that what is broken is beyond our ability to fix; despites our best efforts.

Those who lived in ancient times were desperate to escape death, because death was a fierce enemy.

Many of the ancient myths spoke to the heart longings of people for a champion, who would help.

But is there any evidence that would indicate that any of these ancient deities were historical people?

What about Mithras? No.

I quote: “Unlike Jesus, Mithras was never believed to have been a real historical person.”

https://www.google.ca/search?q=was+mithras+a+real+person&oq=was+mithras+a+real+person&aqs=chrome..69i57.5202j0j8&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8

See article at end of notes.

What about Ishtar? No.

*“A popular meme has been circulating the internet. Superimposed over an image of Ishtar are these words: “This is Ishtar: pronounced ‘Easter.’ Easter was originally the celebration of Ishtar, the Assyrian and Babylonian goddess of fertility and sex. Her symbols (like the egg and the bunny) were and still are fertility and sex symbols (or did you actually think eggs and bunnies had anything to do with resurrection?). After Constantine decided to Christianize the Empire, Easter was changed to represent Jesus. But at its roots, Easter (which is how you pronounce Ishtar) is all about celebrating fertility and sex.”*  
  
I quote, *“there is absolutely no conclusive connection between the pagan goddess Ishtar and the Christian celebration of Easter.*

*Any theory that Easter is named after Ishtar is pure speculation. There is also no proof that Ishtar was ever associated with*[*eggs or rabbits*](https://www.gotquestions.org/easter-bunny-eggs.html)*as symbols. In fact, Ishtar’s sacred animal seems to have been the lion.”* https://www.gotquestions.org/Ishtar-Easter.html

What about Horus? No.

See article at end of notes.

And Dionysus? No.

See article at end of notes.

The names of Ishtar, Mithras, Horus and Dionysus are all but forgotten.

No one knows their stories; or what it was they supposedly did.

And were you to read the stories about them that have been preserved, their life and actions are full of contradictions.

They are far from being “a savior.”

Additionally, there is no world-wide movement, numbering in the billions who follow them.

Is Jesus in the same category as Ishtar or Horus or Mithras or Dionysus?

Absolutely not!

They do no stand on equal ground with Jesus.

The fact that Jesus lived is well documented.

He is an historical person.

In that regards he is distinct… from all ….other mythological deities.

Is Jesus’ life, teachings and miracles, an exaggerated or fictitious story?

Did his followers liberally borrow from ancient myths and use them to embellish what Jesus said and did?

Absolutely not!

What Jesus said is well documented.

What Jesus did is well documented.

His death and resurrection…are well documented.

# Exploding the Mithras Myth

by [Jon Sorensen](https://strangenotions.com/author/jon-sorensen/)   

[](https://strangenotions.com/exploding-mithras-myth/)

**In an effort to cast doubt on Christianity, skeptics will attempt to point out parallels between the beliefs and practices of Christians to those of the Roman cult of Mithras.** In this article we will examine the most commonly encountered parallels and answer their claims.

Lists of parallels can be found in skeptic literature or by searching the Internet and they usually appear as follows:

* Mithras preceded Christianity by roughly 600 years.
* Mithras was born on December 25.
* He was considered a great teacher and had twelve disciples.
* Mithras also performed miracles.
* Mithras was called “the good shepherd,” “the way, the truth and the light,” “redeemer,” “savior,” and “messiah.”
* He was identified with the lion and the lamb.
* He was buried in a tomb and after three days he rose again and his resurrection was celebrated every year.
* Mithraism had a Eucharist or “Lord’s Supper” that involved consecrated bread and wine.
* Their initiation ceremonies included a baptism to remove sins.

## ****Who was Mithras?****

Worship of the god Mithras became popular among Roman soldiers at its peak in the second and third centuries. Much of what we know about this religion comes from ancient reliefs and other sculptures. Because no written documents defining the mythology and ritual beliefs of Mithraism exist, scholars can only do their best to interpret the elements pictured in the surviving artwork.

The basic myth begins with Mithras being born when he emerged from a rock. In this scene he is most often depicted as a youth, carrying a torch, a dagger, and wearing a soft cone-shaped cap with the top pulled forward (also known as a Phrygian cap). The most popular image of Mithras depicts him slaying a bull; thought to be the first act of creation (Manfred Claus, [*The Roman Cult of Mithras*](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0415929784/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0415929784&linkCode=as2&tag=ththve-20), p. 81).

## ****Does Mithraism predate Christianity?****

Prior to the first century A.D., belief in a Zoroastrian divinity named Mitra was common among the ancient Persians. “*Mitra* (or *miθra* in the Old Iranian dialect of Avestan) means *treaty* or *contract*. Mitra was believed to be treaty and contract personified” (Claus, p. 3). The most popular hypothesis holds that Roman soldiers encountered this religion during military excursions to areas known today as Iran and Iraq. For many years scholars believed that the Roman mystery cult was based on the ancient Persian god, thus predating Christianity. This assumption begins with early twentieth-century Belgian archaeologist and historian Franz Cumont (cf. Cumont’s book [*The Mysteries of Mithra*](https://strangenotions.com/exploding-mithras-myth/The%20Mysteries%20of%20Mithra)).

While Cumont’s work is regarded as pioneering in the field, many recent scholars have challenged his assumption. According to John Hinnells at the *First International Congress of Mithraic Studies*held in 1971, “We must now conclude that [Cumont’s] reconstruction simply will not stand. It receives no support from the Iranian material and is in fact in conflict with the ideas of that tradition as they are represented in the extant texts. Above all, it is a theoretical reconstruction which does not accord with the actual Roman iconography” (John R. Hinnells, [*Mithraic Studies*](http://books.google.com/books/about/Mithraic_Studies.html?id=eNMXAAAAIAAJ)*,* vol. 2, “Reflections on the bull-slaying scene”).

Manfred Claus, a professor of ancient history at the Free University of Berlin, also supports this position: “The mysteries cannot be shown to have developed from Persian religious ideas, nor does it make sense to interpret them as a forerunner of Christianity” ([*The Roman Cult of Mithras*](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0415929784/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0415929784&linkCode=as2&tag=ththve-20), p. 7).

## ****Was Mithras born on December 25?****

According to inscriptions on candle votives and other works of art found in Mithraeum, there is a link between Mithras and the Roman sun god Sol Invictus (Unconquered Sun). In some cases it appears the Mithraists believed that Mithras and Sol were manifestations of the same god. In others they appear to be two gods united as one. And in yet others they appear to be two distinct gods. These connections are difficult to understand given our limited knowledge of the belief system, but they are important because they help to explain why the birthday of Mithras was celebrated on December 25.

In A.D. 274, the Roman Emperor Aurelian gave the cult of Sol Invictus official status alongside the other traditional cults of the Empire. According to a manuscript known as the *[Chronography of 354](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chronography_of_354)*, the birth of Sol Invictus was celebrated on December 25. Given the fact that the Mithraists equated their god with Sol in one way or another, it is understandable that they would then appropriate the established date as their own.

The problem for the skeptic is that no evidence exists to suggest that Aurelian was a Mithraist, or that he even had Mithraism in mind when he instituted the feast of Sol Invictus. The date of the festival became important to the Mithraists *because* they equated their god with Sol.

Another interesting fact about the *[Chronography of 354](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chronography_of_354)* is that it is the earliest mention of the feast of Sol Invictus being celebrated on December 25. Coincidentally, the celebration of the birth of Christ by Christians is also mentioned as having been on that day. Pope Benedict XVI comments on this before he became pope:

"The claim used to be made that December 25 developed in opposition to the Mithras myth, or as a Christian response to the cult of the unconquered sun promoted by Roman emperors in the third century in their efforts to establish a new imperial religion. However, these old theories can no longer be sustained. The decisive factor was the connection of creation and Cross, of creation and Christ’s conception." **(Joseph Ratzinger;**[***The Spirit of the Liturgy***](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0898707846/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0898707846&linkCode=as2&tag=ththve-20)**, p. 107)**

As Pope Benedict points out, the Christians came to date Christ’s birth on December 25 based on a belief that his conception and Passion were thought to have occurred on the same day of the year ([*The Spirit of the Liturgy*](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0898707846/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0898707846&linkCode=as2&tag=ththve-20)*,*pp.105-107). There is no evidence that there was any attempt by the Christian community to “baptize” a pagan celebration.

## ****Was Mithras considered a great teacher who had twelve disciples?****

It is a stretch to claim that Mithras was a teacher in the same way Jesus was. Unlike Jesus, Mithras was never believed to have been a real historical person who actually walked the countryside imparting knowledge to his followers. The claim that Mithras had twelve disciples is best summed up in the companion guide to the film [*Zeitgeist*](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00443XONE/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B00443XONE&linkCode=as2&tag=ththve-20): "Mithra surrounded by the twelve “companions” is a motif found on many Mithraic remains and representing the twelve signs of the zodiac....The point here is not whether or not these companions are depicted as interacting in the same manner as the disciples of Jesus but that the theme of the god or godman with the twelve surrounding him is common enough—and with very popular deities in the same region—to have served as a precedent for the Christian Twelve with Christ at their center." **(cf. Zeitgeist: The Movie Companion Source Guide)**

It is true that there are depictions of astronomical symbols in Mythraic remains, but as Manfred Claus explains, “Scarcely less numerous are the modern attempts to explain them in detail. But this cannot be done without making assumptions that are themselves highly speculative” ([*The Roman Cult of Mithras*](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0415929784/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0415929784&linkCode=as2&tag=ththve-20) p. 87). The speculation on the part of the writers of [*Zeitgeist*](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00443XONE/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B00443XONE&linkCode=as2&tag=ththve-20) is that there is any interaction at all between Mithras and the twelve symbols of the zodiac. The signs do appear in sculptures, but their purpose and meaning is altogether unclear.

Jesus did not have pagan astrology in mind when he chose twelve disciples to represent the twelve tribes of Israel ([Matt. 19:28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.%2019.28)). In Scripture, the number twelve represents divine authority and appointment as well as governmental foundation, perfection, and completeness. That there is any reliance on the significance of the number twelve to pagan astrology is pure speculation.

Twelve is a number of significance in many cultures, but that doesn’t mean that any one culture borrowed it from another. For instance, the Twelve Nidānas in Buddhism identify the origins of suffering and ignorance, yet most scholars would not point to any causal relationship between early Buddhism and the mystery religions of the first-century Romans (cf. Ronald H. Nash, [*The Gospel and the Greeks*](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0875525598/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0875525598&linkCode=as2&tag=ththve-20), p. 168).

## ****Did Mithras also perform miracles?****

One source for the notion that Mithras was believed to have performed miracles comes from a quote by John R. Hinnells’ [*Mithraic Studies*](http://books.google.com/books/about/Mithraic_Studies.html?id=eNMXAAAAIAAJ) that appears in the *Zeitgeist Companion Guide* as follows:

"[T]he side panels of many Mithraic reliefs and paintings are interpreted as representations of the primeval life of the god, in which he performed miracles, experienced various adventures, and celebrated an archetypal communion meal before he ascended to heaven." **(cf. Zeitgeist: The Movie Companion Source Guide)**

This quote by Hinnells is taken out of context. As presented here, it would appear that the author supports the idea that the reliefs and paintings depict Mithras partaking in acts that are also attributed to Jesus. The chapter that this quote is taken from is actually a critique of the work done by Franz Cumont. In it, Hinnells is refuting the idea that these reliefs should be interpreted against the background of Persian Zoroastrianism and how doing so is problematic given the lack of evidence connecting the two belief systems (cf. [*Mithraic Studies*](http://books.google.com/books/about/Mithraic_Studies.html?id=eNMXAAAAIAAJ) vol. 2, p. 290-312).

By definition a miracle is “a sign or wonder, such as a healing or the control of nature, which can only be attributed to divine power” (glossary of [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*](http://old.usccb.org/catechism/text/glossary.shtml)). We have the testimony of the followers of Jesus that he performed miracles. We do not have this type of affirmation in the case of Mithras. In its place we have speculative interpretations of Mithraic artwork by a few scholars who begin from a false premise.

**Was Mithras called “the good shepherd,” “the way, the truth and the light,” “redeemer,” “savior,” and “Messiah”?**  
Of these five titles, only the terms *redeemer* and *savior* can be verified with any certainty, but the Mithraists themselves did not use them to describe their god. Instead, they are generally found in the works of scholars who draw parallels between Christ and the gods of the Roman mystery religions.

In response to this claim, Ronald H. Nash explains, “Worshippers of Mithra believed that after death the souls of Mithra’s true disciples are lead by Mithra himself . . . to their final blessed destination. This belief allows Mithra to be called, rather loosely, a ‘redeemer-god’” ([*The Gospel and the Greeks*](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0875525598/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0875525598&linkCode=as2&tag=ththve-20), p. 135).

That Christianity and Mithraism are religions of redemption is not in dispute; however, the nature of redemption and the characteristics of the redeemer bear almost no similarities. Redemption in the mystery religions dealt primarily with deliverance from daily hardships, while redemption in the Christian sense is for the remission of sins. The belief that a man was entirely unable to overcome sin by his own effort but rather relied on the grace of God would have been foreign to the worshippers of the Roman cults.

## ****Was Mithras identified with the lion and the lamb?****

One is hard-pressed to find any evidence that Mithras was identified with a lamb, but there are indications that the image of a lion held some importance in the cult of Mithras. “Lion” was even the name of one of their initiatory grades ([*The Roman Cult of Mithras*](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0415929784/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0415929784&linkCode=as2&tag=ththve-20), p. 135). In some Mithraeum there have been found statues of lions and depictions of them in reliefs, but it is not known what their significance or relationship to Mithras was. There is certainly no evidence that these lions either represent or are manifestations of the Roman god.

There are statues that have been found in some Mithraeum in the shape of a lion-headed man. Although there are no inscriptions to tell us who the Mithraists believe this god was, we do know that the Greeks gave the name Aion to an Egyptian god of time who was generally pictured in a similar way. Clauss suggest that because Mithras was thought to be “a god of the unfolding year,” his worshipers may have identified him with Aion ([*The Roman Cult of Mithras*](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0415929784/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0415929784&linkCode=as2&tag=ththve-20), p. 165). While there may be some connection with Mithras and Aion, a lion-headed man has nothing to do with the imagery of the lion used to describe Jesus in Scripture. The lion is a powerful animal whose symbolic use in writing suggests strength. Jesus is described as the “Lion of the tribe of Judah” ([Rev. 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev.%205.5)), but lion imagery is also used to describe the powerful enemies of the Christians ([2 Tim. 4:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Tim.%204.17), [1 Pet. 5:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Pet.%205.8)).

## ****Did Mithraism have a Eucharist or “Lord’s Supper” that involved consecrated bread and wine?****

Skeptics use a quote from early Christian apologist Justin Martyr to prove that the Eucharist was plagiarized from the liturgical celebration of Mithraism. The following excerpt is from his [*First Apology*](http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0126.htm). In context, he is describing the Christian celebration of the Eucharist for his pagan audience: "For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Savior, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.  
   
For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, “This do in remembrance of Me, this is My body;” and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, “This is My blood;” and gave it to them alone. Which the wicked devils have imitated in the mysteries of Mithras, commanding the same thing to be done. For, that bread and a cup of water are placed with certain incantations in the mystic rites of one who is being initiated; you either know or can learn." **(**[***First Apology***](http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0126.htm)**, ch. 66)**

The claim made by skeptics is that Justin is admitting to a parallel with the Mithraic celebration. To assume that the Christians borrowed this ritual from an earlier pagan cult requires one to hold to the assumption of Franz Cumont that the Mithraic ritual predates the Christian practice. But as I have already pointed out, many modern scholars downplay the idea that the practices of the Romans were anything like those of the earlier Persians.

It was not uncommon in ancient religious gatherings for the devotees to participate in a ritual meal as part of their worship. Commenting on the practice of the Mithraists, Clauss wrote, “The ritual meal was probably simply a component of regular common meals. Such meals have always been an essential part of religious assembly: eating and drinking together creates community and renders visible the fact that those who partake are members of one and the same group” ([*The Roman Cult of Mithras*](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0415929784/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0415929784&linkCode=as2&tag=ththve-20), p. 113).

There is no evidence that the Christians borrowed from the Mithraists in their liturgy. Jesus modeled the Eucharist after the Jewish celebration of the Passover. It is likely that the pagan mystery rituals were not even an afterthought, if they even existed at that time.

In addition to this, we must take Justin Martyr’s word for it when he describes the ritual of the Mithraists. There is no indication in any of Justin’s writings that he was ever a Mithraist himself, so it’s likely that his information is secondhand.

The archaeological evidence does not provide us much insight into the actual ritual meal, but according to Clauss, “Mithraists did not just receive bread and wine or water, as the literary sources seem to suggest, but were in addition served actual meals” ([*The Roman Cult of Mithras*](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0415929784/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0415929784&linkCode=as2&tag=ththve-20), p. 115). This point is further strengthened by the fact that in all of the Mithraeum there can be found various dishes, eating utensils, and small pits filled with the bones of pigs, cattle, fish, and lamb which may have been discarded there after the meal.

The truth is, we know very little about this ancient mystery cult’s ritual practices. Some scholars claim that this is due to Christians vigorously suppressing any knowledge of them, but that leaves unexplained the number of reliefs, statues, and places of worship that survived. It’s more likely that, as a “mystery religion,” the Mithraists may not have written anything down in order to preserve the mystery.

## ****Did the Mithraic initiation ceremonies include a baptism to remove sins?****

According to early Christian writer Tertullian, the worshippers of Mithras did use water in some way during their initiation ceremonies, but it didn’t end there. Tertullian writes:

"Likewise [the Mithraists] honor the gods themselves by washings. Moreover, by carrying water around, and sprinkling it, they everywhere expiate country-seats, houses, temples, and whole cities: at all events, at the Apollinarian and Eleusinian games they are baptized; and they presume that the effect of their doing that is their regeneration and the remission of the penalties due to their perjuries." **(**[***On Baptism***](http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0321.htm)**, ch. 5)**

This appears at first glance to be a slam-dunk for the skeptic, but Tertullian wrote this sometime late in the second century. We have no other evidence available to us that suggests the Mithraists practiced anything like Christian baptism prior to this witness.

The early Christians practiced baptism because it was instituted by Jesus Christ. The existence of an initiation theme in early Christianity does not mean it was borrowed from a pagan religion. As Mircea Eliade, author of a definitive study of pagan initiation rites, explains:

"Such a theme could have been taken directly from one of the esoteric Jewish sects, especially the Essenes, concerning whom the Dead Sea manuscripts have now added sensationally to our knowledge. Indeed, it is not even necessary to suppose that an initiatory theme was “borrowed” by Christianity from some other religion." **(**[***Rites and Symbols of Initiation***](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0882143581/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0882143581&linkCode=as2&tag=ththve-20)**, p. 116)**

Some Jewish sects were already familiar with baptism. Pope Benedict XVI agrees that the people of Qumran, where the Dead Sea scrolls were found, may have influenced both John the Baptist and Jesus. (cf. Joseph Ratzinger, [*Jesus of Nazareth*](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1586171984/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=1586171984&linkCode=as2&tag=ththve-20), p. 14). He then goes on to explain how this new baptism differed from other rites: “The baptism that [John the Baptist] enjoined is different from the usual religious ablutions. It cannot be repeated, and it is meant to be the concrete enactment of a conversion that gives the whole of life a new direction forever” (p.14).

This is a far cry from Tertullian’s description of pagans baptizing everything from their temples to their chairs, and seeking it out repeatedly as reparation for any wrongdoing. While initiation rites do exist in other religions, Christian baptism is unique among them.

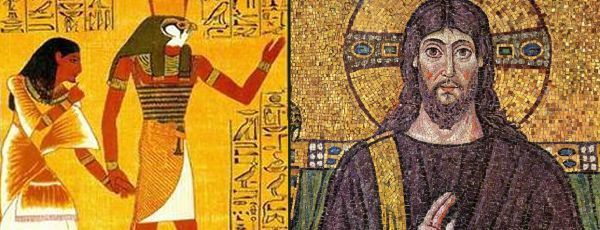
## ****Conclusion****

The mythology and rites of the earliest Mithraists do not present themselves as close parallels to Christian beliefs and practices. When they do resemble Christianity to some degree, they can be found to be dated well after the establishment in the Christian religion.

We have also seen that many of the supposed parallels between Christianity and Mithraism are based on outdated scholarship that relies heavily on the assumption that the Roman cult was a natural extension of the ancient Persian religion rather than an entirely new late first-century system. Therefore, in the opinion of this author, our examination of the evidence is enough to dismiss the claim that Christianity is merely borrowed from this pagan cult.  
   
   
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https://strangenotions.com/exploding-mithras-myth/

**Debunking the Jesus/Horus Connection**

[](https://strangenotions.com/horus-manure/)

“Many atheists, neo-pagans, and other disbelievers of Christianity claim the story of Jesus Christ was borrowed from earlier mythologies. In recent years, a claim has been making the rounds that Jesus is based on the Egyptian god, Horus.

**Who was Horus?**  
Horus is one of the oldest recorded deities in the ancient Egyptian religion. Often depicted as a falcon or a man with a falcon head, Horus was believed to be the god of the sun and of war. Initially he appeared as a local god, but over time the ancient Egyptians came to believe the reigning pharaoh was a manifestation of Horus (cf. Encyclopedia Britannica, “Horus”).

**What about Jesus?**  
The skeptical claims being made about Jesus are not always the same. In some versions he was a persuasive teacher whose followers later attempted to deify him by adopting aspects of earlier god-figures, while in others he is merely an amalgamation of myths and never really existed at all. Both versions attempt to provide evidence that the Gospel accounts of the life of Christ are rip-offs.

In the 2008 documentary film *[Religulous](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0815241/)* (whose name is a combination of religion and ridiculous), Bill Maher confronts an unprepared Christian with this claim. Here is part of their interaction.

**Bill Maher:** But the Jesus story wasn’t original.  
**Christian man:** How so?  
**Maher:** Written in 1280 B.C., the [*Book of the Dead*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_the_Dead) describes a God, Horus. Horus is the son of the god Osiris, born to a virgin mother. He was baptized in a river by Anup the Baptizer who was later beheaded. Like Jesus, Horus was tempted while alone in the desert, healed the sick, the blind, cast out demons, and walked on water. He raised Asar from the dead. “Asar” translates to “Lazarus.” Oh, yeah, he also had twelve disciples. Yes, Horus was crucified first, and after three days, two women announced Horus, the savior of humanity, had been resurrected.

Maher is only repeating things that are and believed by many people today. Similar claims are made in movies such as Zeitgeist and Religulous and in pseudo-academic books such as [*Christ in Egypt: The Jesus-Horus Connection*](http://www.amazon.com/dp/0979963117/ref=as_li_ss_til?tag=ththve-20&camp=0&creative=0&linkCode=as4&creativeASIN=0979963117&adid=19F3SAYX6YGYNNVE1MX4) and [*Pagan Origins of the Christ Myth*](http://www.amazon.com/dp/0910309531/ref=as_li_ss_til?tag=ththve-20&camp=0&creative=0&linkCode=as4&creativeASIN=0910309531&adid=1KRTWB23MJ092FC5NYPY). Often Christians are not prepared for this type of encounter, and some are even swayed by this line of argumentation. Maher’s tirade provides a good summary of the claims, so let’s deconstruct it, one line at a time.

**Written in 1280 BC, the Book of the Dead describes a God, Horus.**  
In fact, there are many “books of the dead.” But there is no single, official Book of the Dead. The books are collections of ancient Egyptian spells that were believed to help the deceased on their journey to the afterlife. The title Book of the Dead comes from an Arabic label referring to the fact that the books were mostly found with mummies (cf. [*The Oxford Essential Guide to Egyptian Mythology*](http://www.amazon.com/dp/042519096X/ref=as_li_ss_til?tag=ththve-20&camp=0&creative=0&linkCode=as4&creativeASIN=042519096X&adid=0H3H4VJS6YJFVJ3ZT3DX), “Funerary Literature”). Some of these texts contain vignettes depicting the god Horus, but they don’t tell us much about him.

Our information about Horus comes from a variety of archaeological sources. What we do know from the most recent scholarship on the subject is that there were many variations of the story, each of them popularized at different times and places throughout the 5,000-year span of ancient Egyptian history. Egyptologists recognize the possibility that these differences may have been understood as aspects or facets of the same divine persona, but they nevertheless refer to them as distinct Horus-gods (cf. [*The Oxford Essential Guide to Egyptian Mythology*](http://www.amazon.com/dp/042519096X/ref=as_li_ss_til?tag=ththve-20&camp=0&creative=0&linkCode=as4&creativeASIN=042519096X&adid=0H3H4VJS6YJFVJ3ZT3DX), “Horus”).

Part of the problem with the “Jesus is Horus” claim is that in order to find items that even partially fit the life story of Jesus, advocates of the view must cherry-pick bits of myth from different epochs of Egyptian history. This is possible today because modern archaeology has given us extensive knowledge of Egypt’s religious beliefs and how they changed over time, making it possible to cite one detail from this version of a story and another from that.

But the early Christians, even if they had wanted to base the Gospels on the Horus myths, would have had no way to do so. They might have known what was believed about Horus in the Egypt of their day, but they would have had no access to the endless variations of the stories that laid buried in the sands until archaeologists started digging them up in the 1800s.

Another part of the problem is that the claimed parallels between Jesus and Horus contain half-truths, distortions, and flat-out falsehoods. For example...

**Horus is the son of the god Osiris, born to a virgin mother.**  
The mother of Horus was believed to be the goddess Isis. Her husband, the god Osiris, was killed by his enemy Seth, the god of the desert, and later dismembered. Isis managed to retrieve all of Osiris’s body parts except for his phallus, which was thrown into the Nile and eaten by catfish. (I’m not making this up). Isis used her goddess powers to temporarily resurrect Osiris and fashion a golden phallus. She was then impregnated, and Horus was conceived. However this story may be classified, it is not a virgin birth.

**He was baptized in a river by Anup the Baptizer, who was later beheaded.**  
There is no character named Anup the Baptizer in ancient Egyptian mythology. This is the concoction of a 19th-century English poet and amateur Egyptologist by the name of Gerald Massey (see sidebar 2 below). Massey is the author of several books on the subject of Egyptology; however, professional Egyptologists have largely ignored his work. In fact, his writing is held in such low regard in archaeological circles that it is difficult to find references to him in reputable modern publications.

In the book [*Christ in Egypt: The Horus-Jesus Connection*](http://www.amazon.com/dp/0979963117/ref=as_li_ss_til?tag=ththve-20&camp=0&creative=0&linkCode=as4&creativeASIN=0979963117&adid=1BMKC1C75RE6NF271FZE) (Stellar House Publishing, 2009), author D. M. Murdoch, drawing heavily from Gerald Massey, identifies “Anup the Baptizer” as the Egyptian god Anubis. Murdoch then attempts to illustrate parallels between Anubis and John the Baptist.

Some evidence exists in Egyptian tomb paintings and sculptures to support the idea that a ritual washing was done during the coronation of Pharaohs, but it is always depicted as having been done by the gods. This indicates that it may have been understood as a spiritual event that likely never happened in reality (cf. Alan Gardiner, “The Baptism of Pharaoh,” [*The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*](http://www.ees.ac.uk/publications/journal-egyptian-archaeology.html), vol. 36). This happened only to kings (if it happened to them at all), and one searches in vain to find depictions of Horus being ritually washed by Anubis.

**Like Jesus, Horus was tempted while alone in the desert.**  
The companion guide to the film [*Zeitgeist*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zeitgeist:_The_Movie) outlines the basis for this claim by explaining, “As does Satan with Jesus, Set (aka Seth) attempts to kill Horus. Set is the ‘god of the desert’ who battles Horus, while Jesus is tempted in the desert by Satan” (p. 23). Doing battle with the “god of the desert” is not the same as being tempted while alone in the desert; and according to the Gospel accounts, Satan did not attempt to kill Jesus there (cf. [Matt. 4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.%204), [Mark 1:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark%201.12-13), [Luke 4:1-13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%204.1-13)).

The relationship between Horus and Seth in the ancient Egyptian religion was quite different than the relationship between Jesus and Satan. While Seth and Horus were often at odds with each other, it was believed that their reconciliation was what allowed the pharaohs to rule over a unified country. It was believed that the pharaoh was a “Horus reconciled to Seth, or a gentleman in whom the spirit of disorder had been integrated” ([*The Oxford Guide to Egyptian Mythology*](http://www.amazon.com/dp/042519096X/ref=as_li_ss_til?tag=ththve-20&camp=0&creative=0&linkCode=as4&creativeASIN=042519096X&adid=0TV1CXW62GM5XWPR4A46), “Seth”). In stark contrast, there is never any reconciliation between Jesus and Satan in Scripture.

**Healed the sick, the blind, cast out demons, and walked on water.**  
The Metternich Stella, a monument from the 4th century B.C., tells a story in which Horus is poisoned by Seth and brought back to life by the god Thoth at the request of his mother, Isis. The ancient Egyptians used the spell described on this monument to cure people. It was believed that the spirit of Horus would dwell within the sick, and they would be cured the same way he was. This spiritual indwelling is a far cry from the physical healing ministry of Christ. Horus did not travel the countryside laying his hands on sick people and restoring them to health.

**He raised Asar from the dead. “Asar” translates to “Lazarus.”**  
The name Osirus is a Greek transliteration of the Egyptian name Asar. As I mentioned earlier, Osirus is the father of Horus, and, according to the myth, he was killed by Seth and briefly brought back to life by Isis in order to conceive Horus.  It was not Horus who raised “Asar” from the dead. It was his mother. The name Lazarus is actually derived from the Hebrew word Eleazar meaning “God has helped.” This name was common among the Jews of Jesus’ time. In fact, two figures in the New Testament bear this name (cf. John 11, [Luke 16:19-31](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%2016.19-31)).

**Oh, yeah, he also had twelve disciples.**  
Again, this claim finds its origin in the work of Gerald Massey (Ancient Egypt: The Light of the World, book 12), which points to a mural depicting “the twelve who reap the harvest.” But Horus does not appear in the mural. In the various Horus myths, there are indications of the four “Sons of Horus,” or six semi-gods, who followed him, and at times there were various numbers of human followers, but they never add up to twelve. Only Massey arrives at this number, and he does so only by referencing the mural with no Horus on it.

**Yes, Horus was crucified first.**  
In many of the books and on the websites that attempt to make this connection, it is often pointed out that there are several ancient depictions of Horus standing with his arms spread in cruciform.  One can only answer this with a heartfelt “So what?” A depiction of a person standing with his arms spread is not unusual, nor is it evidence that the story of a crucified savior predates that of Jesus Christ. We do have extensive evidence from extra-biblical sources that the Romans around the time of Christ practiced crucifixion as a form of capital punishment. Not only that, but we have in the Bible actual eyewitness accounts of Jesus’ crucifixion. On the other hand, there is no historical evidence at all to suggest that the ancient Egyptians made use of this type of punishment.

**And after three days, two women announced Horus, the savior of humanity, had been resurrected.**  
As I explained before, the story of the child Horus dying and being brought back to life is described on the Metternich Stella, which in no way resembles the sacrificial death of Jesus. Christ did not die as a child, only to be brought back to life because his grieving mother went to the animal-headed god of magic. The mythology surrounding Horus is closely tied with the pharaohs, because they were believed to be Horus in life and Osirus in death. With the succession of pharaohs over the centuries came new variations on the myth. Sometimes Horus was believed to be the god of the sky, and at other times he was believed to be the god of war, at other times both; but he was never described as a “savior of humanity.”

**Combating the never-ending list of parallels**  
If you do an Internet search on this subject, you will come across lists of supposed parallels between Jesus and Horus that are much longer than Bill Maher’s filmic litany. What they all have in common is that they do not cite their sources. Should you encounter people who try to challenge you with these claims, ask them to explain where it is they got their information. Many times you will find that they originate with Gerald Massey or one of his contemporaries. Sometimes they have been repeated and expanded on by others. But these claims have little or no connection to the facts.

You should challenge the person making the claim to produce a primary source or a statement from a scholarly secondary source that has a footnote that can be checked. Then make sure the sources being quoted come from scholars with a Ph.D. in a relevant field, such as a person who teaches Egyptology at the university level.

Due to the mass of misinformation on the Internet and in print on this subject, it is important to respond to these claims using credible sources. Fortunately, there are many good books on Egypt and Egyptology in print. But there are also bad ones, so make sure to verify the author’s credentials before purchasing them. The study of ancient Egypt has come a long way since its beginning in the 1800s, and new discoveries are being made even today that improve upon our understanding of the subject. It’s safe to say they will do nothing to bolster the alleged Jesus-Horus connection.

The Horus mythology developed over a period of 5,000 years, and as a result it can be a complex subject to tackle. But you don’t have to be an Egyptologist to answer all of these claims. You just need to know where to look for the answers—and to be aware of the claims’ flawed sources.

**Appendix 1:**  
**A brief history of modern Egyptology**

[](https://strangenotions.com/horus-manure/)Modern Egyptology really begins with the French campaign in Egypt and Syria initiated by Napoleon Bonaparte around 1798. Among other things, the French established a scientific exploration of the region. In 1799, a soldier named Pierre-Francois Bouchard discovered the Rosetta Stone, which contained a bilingual text that eventually led to the translation of Egyptian hieroglyphs. Prior to this, our knowledge of ancient Egypt’s 5,000-year history was limited to what was known through the writings of pre-Christian Greek historians such as Herodotus and Strabo.

The discovery of the Rosetta Stone led to a renewed interest by the Europeans in all things ancient Egypt, commonly referred to now as “Egyptomania.”  It was not until nearly a century later that Egyptology as an academic discipline began to come into its own. Since that time, we have a much better understanding of ancient Egyptian history and culture.

**Appendix 2:**  
**Massey scholarship**

[](https://strangenotions.com/horus-manure/)When researching the supposed Egyptian influences on Christianity, inevitably one comes across the name Gerald Massey. Massey was an English poet and amateur Egyptologist who lived from 1828 to 1907. He is the author of three books on the subject: The Book of the Beginnings, The Natural Genesis, and Ancient Egypt: The Light of the World. Because his books represent some of the earliest attempts to draw comparisons between the Christian and Egyptian religions, other writers attempting to draw these comparisons frequently cite them.

One recent example is the book Christ in Egypt; The Horus-Jesus Connection by D.M. Murdoch. In it the author states: “This present analysis of the claims regarding the correspondences between the Egyptian and Christian religions is not dependent on Massey’s work for the most part,” yet she devotes an entire chapter of the book to defending the authenticity of Massey’s scholarship (something she does not feel called to do for anyone else she quotes in her book) and thereafter adopting many of the same comparisons.

Critics of Massey’s work often point out that he had no formal education in the area of Egyptology. While this is a valid criticism, I think it is also important to point out that the study of ancient Egyptian religion has advanced far beyond what was known in the 19th century. Not only is much of Massey’s scholarship built on wild speculation, it is also the product of an academic discipline still in its infancy.  
   
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### Related Posts

* [Exploding the Mithras Myth](https://strangenotions.com/exploding-mithras-myth/)

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**Was Jesus Christ an Imitation of Dionysis?**

**[](https://i0.wp.com/beginningandend.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/dionysus.jpg)**

**Dionysus the Greco Roman god of wine.**

Dionysus (also known as Bacchus) was a Greek and Roman god of wine. One of the boldest claims of Jesus being a copy of Dionsyus was a book called ‘The Jesus Mysteries’ which featured the amulet pictured below. on its cover. The authors claimed that the amulet was a depiction of the god Dionysus on a cross, and thus, they concluded, Christianity must have copied the crucifixion account from the Greek god. However, upon basic scrutiny, the claim falls apart.

**[](https://i2.wp.com/beginningandend.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Dionysus-amulet.jpg)**

**Dionysus pictured on a cross.**

The authors of “The Jesus Mysteries”  Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy had their sources for their information critiqued:

“When dealing with ancient sources they are even more blatant. On the basis of some third century pictures of crucifixions, the authors claim Bacchuus [Dionysus] was crucified and Christians copied the idea. This is their piece de resistance and they even put one of the pictures on the cover of their book. But suppose there existed an earlier source who stated categorically that no pagan godman was crucified. That would destroy their case and reading the Jesus Mysteries you would assume that neither Freke or Gandy knew of such a source even if it existed. You would be wrong.They quote from Justin Martyr many times about his concerns that pagans and Christians had some similar rituals (they did and modern scholarship is totally unsurprised by this). He is a second century writer who therefore predates all the pictures of pagan godmen being crucified and he writes:

“But in no instance, not even in any of those called sons of Jupiter, did they imitate the being crucified; for it was not understood by them, all the things said of it having been put symbolically.” Justin Martyr ’s First Apology LV.

No honest scholar would simply fail to quote this vitally important contradiction to their thesis. Gandy did attempt to explain away this passage when it was presented to him but failed utterly and certainly could not say why he ever felt he could simply miss it out of his book.” http://www.tektonics.org/books/jesmystrvw.php

Even if the amulet was real, it’s dated to over 300 years after the crucifixion of Christ. By the 4th century tens of thousands of New Testament manuscripts were in circulation all over the world and the Roman Empire made Christianity its official religion. So the story of Christ’s crucifixion was very well-known. Thus the idea that a 4th century amulet was the inspiration for the Crucifixion in the Gospel’s makes no sense. We cited the Roman historian Tacitus who in 115 AD wrote:

“Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular.http://beginningandend.com/jesus-exist-historical-evidence-jesus-christ/

So again, the account of Jesus’ crucifixion at the orders of Pontius Pilate, just as the Bible details, was well-known even in non-Christian circles.

“Dionysus was born of a virgin” — Again, this blatantly flies in the face of mythology surrounding this pagan god. The two most common stories of Dionysus’ birth involve the god Zeus, his father, either impregnating the [mortal woman Semele](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dionysus#Birth), or [impregnating Persephone](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dionysus#Birth) (the Greek Queen of the underworld).  In either instance, it is not a virgin birth (and it also gives allusion to the Bible’s description of fallen angels impregnating human women, something written in the book of Genesis 2,000 years before the myth of Dionysus).

“Dionsysus was born on December 25th” — Once again, there is no pre-Christian manuscript or evidence of this. And of course the date of December 25th is not significant since it’s not in the Bible.  Some point to Dionysus’ ability to create wine as a sign that Jesus was a copy (since Jesus turned water to wine at a wedding) but Dionysus was the god of wine. Jesus was the Son of God and humanity’s Savior. And while there is non-Christian evidence and proof that Jesus existed, there is **none to support that Dionysus was a real person who actually existed**.  And Jesus Christ was clearly not a copy of Dionysus.

http://beginningandend.com/jesus-copy-horus-mithras-dionysis-pagan-gods/