



Zeitgeist (a German phrase that means "the spirit of the age") is the name of an online video (first released in June 2007) that is making quite an impact on its viewers. In this video, Peter Joseph, the writer and director, seeks to persuade his viewers that the authors of the New Testament borrowed the idea of Jesus' virgin birth, December 25th birth date, twelve disciples, miracles, crucifixion, and resurrection from astrological sources and ancient pagan mystery religions that were around long before the time of Christ. The video even goes so far as to claim that Jesus never existed. Well, these claims are so outrageous, we're glad you've taken the time to investigate them for, as you will see shortly, there is an abundance of evidence that Peter Joseph has greatly erred in his claims.

Below you'll find some of the claims in the video followed by helpful responses and quotations by scholars, historians, world religion experts, Christian apologists and others, as well as links to in-depth articles and books that offer a much more thorough refutation of many of the errors in the first part of the film. (The second and third part of the film deal with areas outside of the scope of this ministry.)

NEW: Response to 9/11 Conspiracy theories by *Popular Mechanics* magazine.

The editors of the magazine consulted an impressive list of scientists, engineers, and other neutral experts who discuss the collapse of the Twin Towers, what hit the Pentagon, etc.

CLAIM 1: THE RESURRECTION ACCOUNT WAS STOLEN FROM EARLIER SOURCES

RESPONSE:

Charlie Campbell, Director of the Always Be Ready Apologetics Ministry, says, "Many of the charges put forth in *Zeitgeist* are based on outdated, disproved ideas that were in circulation at the beginning of the last century.



Here is one example. *Zeitgeist* states that Attis (a Roman deity) was crucified, dead for three days and then resurrected. This is absolutely not true to the mythological account. In the

mythological story, Attis was unfaithful to his goddess lover, and in a jealous rage she made him insane. In that insanity, Attis castrated himself and fled into the forest, where he bled to death. As J. Gresham Machen points out, "The myth contains no account of a resurrection, all that Cybele [the Great Mother goddess] is able to obtain is that the body of Attis should be preserved, that his hair should continue to grow, and that his little finger should move." *Zeitgeist's* claims that Attis was crucified and resurrected are not only inaccurate but very misleading. And that is just the tip of the iceberg. The alleged resurrection of Attis isn't even mentioned until after 150 A.D., long after the time of Jesus."

Dr. Norman Geisler, author of more than 70 books, writes, "The first real parallel of a dying and rising god does not appear until A.D. 150, more than a hundred years after the origin of Christianity. So if there was any influence of one on the other, it was the influence of the historical event of the New Testament [resurrection] on mythology, not the reverse. The only known account of a god surviving death that predates Christianity is the Egyptian cult-god Osiris. In this myth, Osiris is cut into fourteen pieces, scattered around Egypt, then reassembled and brought back to life by the goddess Isis. However, Osiris does not actually come back to physical life but becomes a member of a shadowy underworld... This is far different than Jesus' resurrection account where he was the gloriously risen Prince of life who was seen by others on earth before his ascension into heaven... even if there are myths about dying and rising gods prior to Christianity, that doesn't mean the New Testament writers copied from them. The fictional TV show Star Trek preceded the U.S. Space Shuttle program, but that doesn't mean that newspaper reports of space shuttle missions are influenced by Star Trek episodes!" (*Don't Have Enough Faith to be An Atheist*, 2004, p. 312).

Dr. Alister McGrath, Professor of Historical Theology at Oxford University, says, "Parallels between the pagan myths of dying and rising gods and the New Testament accounts of the resurrection of Jesus are now regarded as remote, to say the least... If anyone borrowed any ideas from anyone, it seems it was the gnostics who took up Christian ideas." (*Intellectuals Don't Need God and Other Modern Myths*, 1993, p. 121).

Charlie Campbell says, "Zeitgeist claims that Mithra, a mythological Persian deity, was dead for three days and then resurrected. I am no scholar on ancient Mithraism, but nowhere in any of the reading I've done on the topic has Mithra's death even been discussed, let alone Zeitgeist's story about three days in a grave and a resurrection. Edwin Yamauchi, a historian and author of the 578 page *Persia and the Bible* concurs. He says, 'We don't know anything about the death of Mithras' (*The Case for the Real Jesus*, p. 172)."

Dr. Gary Habermas and **Dr. J.P. Moreland** write, "Not one clear case of any alleged resurrection teaching appears in any pagan text before the late second century A.D., almost one hundred years after the New Testament was written." (Cited by Dan Story in *The Christian Combat Manual: Helps for Defending your Faith: A Handbook for Practical Apologetics*, 2007, p. 206).

Dr. William Lane Craig, says, "(We) find almost no trace of cults of dying and rising gods in first century Palestine. Moreover, as Hans Grass observes, it would be "unthinkable" in any case that the original disciples would come sincerely to believe that God had raised Jesus from the dead just because they had heard myths about Osiris!" (Dr. William Lane Craig, "Reply to Evan Fales: On the Empty Tomb of Jesus," 2001).

Dr. Ronald Nash, the author of many books including *The Meaning of History* and *The Gospel and the Greeks: Did the New Testament Borrow from Pagan Thought?* writes, "Which mystery gods actually experienced a resurrection from the dead? Certainly no early texts refer to any resurrection of Attis. Attempts to link the worship of Adonis to a resurrection are equally weak. Nor is the case for a resurrection of Osiris any stronger. After Isis gathered together the pieces of Osiris's dismembered body, he became "Lord of the Underworld." "... And of course no claim can be made that Mithras was a dying and rising god. French scholar Andre Boulanger concludes: "The conception that the god dies and is resurrected in order to lead his faithful to eternal life is represented in no Hellenistic mystery religion." (*The Gospel and the Greeks: Did the New Testament Borrow from Pagan Thought?*, p. 161-162)

H. Wayne House writes, "Various mystery religions did exist from early times in Greece; however, it only after the first century A.D. that we begin to have much data on them. It is more likely, therefore, that the mystery religions, observing the success of orthodox Christianity, began to mimic its beliefs and practices, rather than the other way around." (Cited by Dan Story in *The Christian Combat Manual: Helps for Defending your Faith: A Handbook for Practical Apologetics*, 2007, p. 207).

Dr. Ben Witherington, an eminent New Testament scholar and author of more than 30 books, writes, "Here's the big point: Joseph [the producer of *Zeitgeist*] reads the story of Jesus back into these other mythological stories, and then claims—shazam—the story of Jesus comes from these other stories, which he has anachronistically read in light of the Jesus story. This is both bad history and bad religious analysis. To my knowledge there is no story that dates from before the time of Jesus that has most of the specific elements listed in the film as distinguishing the Jesus story. For example the story of a virginal conception, crucifixion, or bodily resurrection of a divine son of God." ("[The Zeitgeist of the 'Zeitgeist Movie'](#)")

CLAIM 2: THE ACCOUNT OF THE THREE KINGS WAS STOLEN

RESPONSE:

Charlie Campbell says, "The claim in the movie *Zeitgeist* that Christianity borrowed the idea of "three kings" for its nativity story from ancient religions is ludicrous. The Bible knows nothing of "three kings" showing up after Jesus' birth. Three kings is an idea that occasionally appears on some poorly researched Christmas cards, but not in the Bible. Matthew's gospel simply says, "Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem" (Matt. 2:1). The magi were known as wise men, not kings. During the Middle Ages legend did develop that the magi were kings and that they were three in number, but this is purely legend, not something taught in the Scriptures. *Zeitgeist's* deceptive attack on the credibility of the Gospel accounts only reveals its lack of credibility when it comes to scholarly research."

Joel McDurmon writes, "*Zeitgeist* informs us that the "three kings" are the three brightest stars in the constellation Orion's belt, which align with Sirius (the Star in the East) to point to the place of the sunrise (Birth of the Sun). The movie assures us that, "These 3 bright stars are called today what they were called in ancient times: The Three Kings." Same old problem, however: no sources except for their pet nineteenth-century authors; nothing before 1822." (*Zeitgeist The Movie Exposed: Is Jesus an Astrological Myth?*, p. 42).

CLAIM 3: JESUS NEVER EXISTED

RESPONSE:

Charlie Campbell says, "To insist that Jesus Christ is a myth—that He never existed—as the *Zeitgeist* movie does, is foolish. Beside the twenty seven New Testament documents that verify He lived, there are thirty nine sources *outside* of the Bible, written within 150 years of Jesus life that mention Him. These sources include the Jewish *Talmud*, the Roman historian Tacitus, the *Didache*, Flavius Josephus, Pliny the Younger, Suetonius, the Gnostic gospels (e.g., the gospel of Thomas), etc. These extrabiblical sources reveal to us more than 100 facts about His life, teaching, death and even resurrection. The *Encyclopedia Britannica*, fifteenth edition, devotes 20,000 words to the person of Jesus Christ and never once hints that He didn't exist. Don't be fooled by *Zeitgeist*, "For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh" (2 John 7)."



Ben Witte rington says, "Both Jewish historians like Josephus, and Roman ones like Tacitus and later Suetonius are perfectly clear Jesus actually existed, and Tacitus tells us he died on a cross, being executed under Pilate. Apparently, Mr. Joseph [producer of *Zeitgeist*] couldn't even give this one fact straight. There is more historical evidence for the existence of Jesus than there is for the historical existence of Julius Caesar for example.... The only persons who doubt the existence of Jesus of Nazareth are those who either hate Christianity and so want it to disappear, or those who have not bothered to do the proper historical homework." ("*The Zeitgeist of the 'Zeitgeist Movie'*")

For additional help on this issue, read: "Did Jesus Really Exist?" by Dr. Paul L. Maier or "Ancient Non Christian Sources for the Life of Christ" by Dr. Gary Habermas

CLAIM 4: THE DECEMBER 25 DATE WAS STOLEN

RESPONSE:

Charlie Campbell says, "Another pitiful criticism put forth in the movie *Zeitgeist* is that the authors of the New Testament borrowed the December 25th date for Jesus' birth from ancient pagan sources. This is ridiculous.



Have the producers of *Zeitgeist* even read the New Testament? Where in the New Testament do we read of any date associated with the birth of Jesus? Nowhere! We have no idea when Jesus was born. The December 25 date originated long after the Gospels were written. Edwin Yamauchi, an author, professor, first rate historian and authority on the world of the first Christians,



says that it was not until about 336 A.D. that the December 25 date became the official date to celebrate Jesus' birth. The sheer absence of any date in the New Testament documents is sufficient enough to overturn *Zeitgeist's* claim; Yamauchi's word on the matter is another nail in the coffin."

Dr. Ben Witherington says, "The Bible says nothing about the specific date or time of Jesus' birth. Most scholars think it was in the spring due to the description of the shepherds being in the fields with their sheep." ("The *Zeitgeist* of the '*Zeitgeist* Movie'")

CLAIM 5: THE ACCOUNT OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH WAS STOLEN

RESPONSE:

Daniel B. Wallace writes, "The virgin birth of the pagan god Dionysus is attested only in post-Christian sources...several centuries *after* Christ." (*Reinventing Jesus*, p. 242).

Edwin Yamauchi says, "There's no evidence of a virgin birth for Dionysus. As the story goes, Zeus, disguised as a human, fell in love with the princess Semele, the daughter of Cadmus, and she became pregnant. Hera, who was Zeus's queen, arranged to have her burned to a crisp, but Zeus rescued the fetus and sewed him into his own thigh until Dionysus was born. So this is not a virgin birth in any sense." (*The Case for the Real Jesus*, p. 180).

Edwin Yamauchi says, "Despite the claims of obvious and profound parallels between Christianity and Mithraism, when one looks at the evidence an entirely different picture emerges. First, Mithra was not thought of as virgin born in the most ancient myths; rather, he arose spontaneously from a rock in a cave." (Cited in *Reinventing Jesus*, p. 242). Lee Strobel adds, "Unless the rock is considered a virgin, this parallel with Jesus evaporates." (*The Case for the Real Jesus*, p. 171).

Charlie Campbell says, "The virgin birth of the Messiah spoken about in Matthew and Luke was not lifted from pagan religions. It was the fulfillment of a prophecy given in the Old Testament book of Isaiah (7:14) six or seven hundred years before Jesus' birth. And many Bible commentators also believe Genesis 3:15 prophecies the virgin birth seeing that the Messiah would be born solely of the woman's seed."

Charlie Campbell says, "The *Zeitgeist* movie says that Krishna, a supposed incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu, was born of a virgin. Edwin Yamauchi says, "That's not accurate. Krishna was born to a mother who already had seven previous sons, as even his followers concede." (Quoted by Lee Strobel in *The Case for the Real Jesus*, p. 182).

CLAIM 6: THE TIME OF JESUS' BIRTH IS CONNECTED WITH THE ASTROLOGICAL CYCLE

Ben Witherington writes, "Much is made by Mr. Joseph [producer of *Zeitgeist*] about how in 1 A.D. a new 'age' or astrological cycle begins, after the age of the Ram. Unfortunately for Mr. Joseph, Jesus was born somewhere between 2-6 B.C. He was not born in 1 A.D. How do we know this? Because Jesus was born whilst Herod the Great was still king of the Holy land, and the records are clear that Herod died about 2 B.C. ergo Jesus had to be born before then (see my articles on these matters in the *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*). How then do we have our modern calendar? Well it was set by a gentleman named Dionysius the short...who had to much time on his hands, and estimated the turn of the era to be at the juncture we now have it, based on when he thought Jesus was born. He was off by four or so years. In any case, the birth of Jesus transpires before the supposed turn of the ages in the astrological schema touted by Mr. Joseph. Jesus' birth certainly did not usher in the age of Pisces or the fish. The fish symbol comes into Christianity from the gematric value of the Greek word ICHTHUS—with each letter standing for a word, in this case Iinos, Christos, theos, nios and soles—Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior. It would be nice as well if at least he could get the astrology and symbology part right—but alas, abandon hope, he hasn't even properly done his homework on that subject either?" ("The *Zeitgeist* of the '*Zeitgeist* Movie'")

CLAIM 7: JESUS' LIFE STORY WAS STOLEN FROM MITHRAISM

RESPONSE:

Charlie Campbell writes, “*Zeitgeist* claims that the events surrounding Mithra’s life were stolen by the New Testament authors. These claims are not credible. Even the *Encyclopedia Britannica* concedes that Mithraism (the religion associated with Mithra) could not have influenced the Gospel writers. It states, “There is little notice of the Persian god [Mithra] in the Roman world until the beginning of the 2nd century, but, from the year AD 136 onward, there are hundreds of dedicatory inscriptions to Mithra. This renewal of interest is not easily explained. The most plausible hypothesis seems to be that Roman Mithraism was practically a new creation, wrought by a religious genius who may have lived as late as c. AD 100 and who gave the old traditional Persian ceremonies a new Platonic interpretation that enabled Mithraism to become acceptable to the Roman world” (Article entry: Mithraism 2004 edition). The four Gospels were done well before the close of the first century. If Mithraism wasn’t even known in the Roman world in the first century, as the *Encyclopedia Britannica* says, then it is misguided to suggest that teachings regarding Mithra influenced the Gospel writers.”

Ron Nash writes, “Allegations of an early Christian dependence on Mithraism have been rejected on many grounds. Mithraism had no concept of the death and resurrection of its god and no place for any concept of rebirth—at least during its early stages.... During the early stages of the cult, the notion of rebirth would have been foreign to its basic outlook.... Moreover, Mithraism was basically a military cult. Therefore, one must be skeptical about suggestions that it appealed to nonmilitary people like the early Christians.” (*Christianity and the Hellenistic World*, p. 144).

Ben Witherington writes, “We really do not have ancient sources on Mithra, comparable to what we have on Moses and the Israelites. Most of what we know about Mithraism comes from the NT era and later. There is no good historical reason to think Mithraism is the origins of either Judaism or Christianity.” (“The *Zeitgeist* of the ‘Zeitgeist Movie’”)

The apostle Peter wrote, “We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to Him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with Him on the sacred mountain” (2 Peter 1:16-18).

CLAIM 8: THE CRUCIFIXION STORY WAS STOLEN

RESPONSE:

Dr. Edwin Bryant, is Professor of Hinduism at Rutgers University and a scholar on Hinduism. He translated the *Bhagavata-Purana* (life of Krishna) for Penguin World Classics and is the author of *Krishna: A Sourcebook*. When asked about the claim that Krishna [a Hindu god] had been crucified, he replied, “That is absolute and complete non-sense. There is absolutely no mention anywhere which alludes to a crucifixion.” He added that Krishna was killed by an arrow from a hunter who accidentally shot him in the heel. He died and ascended. It was not a resurrection. (Cited in “A Refutation of Acharya S’s book *The Christ Conspiracy*” by Mike Licona. *The Christ Conspiracy* is the source for many of the claims in *Zeitgeist*).



Edwin Yamauchi says, “All of these myths are repetitive, symbolic representations of the death and rebirth of vegetation. These are not historical figures, and none of their deaths were intended to provide salvation. In the case of Jesus, even non-Christian authorities, like Josephus and Tacitus, report that he died under Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius. The reports of his resurrection are quite early and are rooted in eyewitness accounts. They have the ring of reality, not the ethereal qualities of myth.” (Quoted by Lee Strobel in *The Case for the Real Jesus*, p. 178).

CLAIM 9: THE IDEA FOR TWELVE DISCIPLES WAS TAKEN FROM THE 12 CONSTELLATIONS OF THE ZODIAC

Joel McDurmon writes, “*Zeitgeist* goes on to claim that “probably the most obvious of all the astrological

symbolism around Jesus regards the 12 disciples,” which, the movie states, are “the 12 constellations of the Zodiac, which Jesus, being the Sun, travels about with.” Why anyone would consider this “the most obvious” of such evidence I don’t know—I’ve never heard it until now. Were it so obvious you would expect it to be widely claimed. Further, what makes it so “obvious”? The only similarity between the two is the number twelve, for which examples can be found anywhere. The most “obvious” of these, to any “real” researcher is the twelve tribes of Israel. Since Jesus was fulfilling the Old Covenant, and was instituting the New Covenant, He was



choosing the “New” twelve tribes. Jesus himself said that the disciples would sit as judges over the twelve tribes (Matt. 19:28). This is a genuine historical parallel which is reinforced in the book of Revelation, when these two twelves are joined together in New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:12–14). Why stretch for such wild parallels in the stars when the Bible is self-consistent in its symbolism? Biblical theology needs no help from the astrologers that it despises anyway. The movie even notices that “the number 12 is replete throughout the bible,” but then misses the impact of that fact and concludes arbitrarily, “This text has more to do with astrology than anything else.” If the Bible contains the number twelve throughout, why go outside the Bible to interpret what significance “12 disciples” may have? To do so betrays a desire to impose a non-Biblical meaning onto the Biblical text.” (*Zeitgeist The Movie Exposed. Is Jesus an Astrological Myth?*, p. 56).

Dr. Ben Witherington says, “What about the claim that the twelve disciples represent the 12 constellations of the Zodiac? Well, once again, Mr. Joseph [the producer of *Zeitgeist*] has not bothered to do his homework. There was this little entity called the 12 tribes of Israel, going back to Jacob and his 12 sons. Those stories in Genesis are not astrological in character at all, but rather are explanations of a historical origins of a people. The 12 disciples are chosen by Jesus, not because he was a stargazer, but because he was attempting to reform, and indeed re-form Israel. The twelve disciples represent the 12 tribes of Israel, and you will remember that Jesus promised that at the eschaton [Jesus’ coming kingdom] they will be sitting on 12 thrones, judging those 12 tribes [see Matthew 19:28]. Once more, this is a sort of historical and eschatological thinking, not a sort of astrological thinking, and the claim that the Bible has more to do with astrology than anything else, can only be called a category mistake. Clearly, Mr. Joseph has done no work whatsoever in the study of the various genre of Biblical literature which he could have gotten from any standard introduction to the Bible, even those written by agnostics and skeptics.” (“The Zeitgeist of the ‘Zeitgeist Movie’”)

CLAIM 10: HORUS WAS BORN OF A VIRGIN ON DECEMBER 25th, RESURRECTED, ETC.

Dr. Ben Witherington says, “Unfortunately it [*Zeitgeist*] gets most of the story of Horus wrong. He claims the Horus myth says he was born on Dec. 25th, born of a virgin, star in the east, worshipped by kings, and was a teacher by 12. This he claims was the original form of the myth in 3000 B.C. It would be nice to know how Mr. Joseph learned this, since we don’t have any ancient Egyptians texts that go back that far on this matter. Furthermore this disinformation he gives in the film is refuted by numerous analysis of the proper sources... again not only is Mr. Joseph guilty of falsely blending together various different religions which developed largely regionally and independently of each other, he is actually guilty of falsifying some of the claims made in the Egyptian myths... Ironically he does a disservice to all the religions he discusses... I could go on about the egregious errors in his presentation



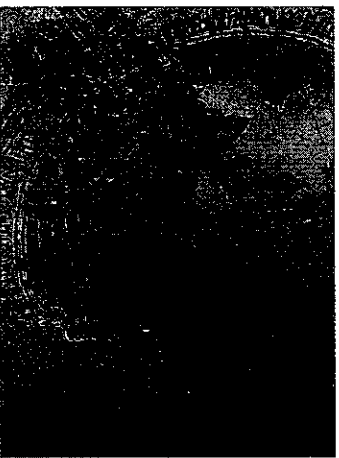
of Horus, who was not called the lamb of God, and was not crucified and resurrected, even in the myth. The story of Horus is of course the story of the rebirth of the sun in east, and it is based on the cycles of nature, not on any sort of historical claims at all, unlike the story of Jesus. But more to the point the story of Horus does not include many of the elements that Joseph claims it does—shame on him for not doing his homework properly even on Egyptology.” (“The Zeitgeist of the ‘Zeitgeist Movie’”)

Dr. Ben Witherington says, “There was no such thing as the concept of bodily resurrection in Egyptian religion, and certainly not of a mythological deity, Horus, was not believed to have a human body. Sometimes commentators will use the term resurrection to speak loosely about an afterlife in another world, not a bodily return to this world.” (“The Zeitgeist of the ‘Zeitgeist Movie’”)

Michael Houdmann says, "Horus becoming a teacher at age 12 (mimicking the account of Jesus at the temple as a youth) is nowhere to be found in accounts of Horus; neither are there any statements to the effect that he had 12 "disciples." According to the Horus accounts, Horus had four semi-gods that were followers and some indications of 16 human followers and an unknown number of blacksmiths that went into battle with him. No accounts of Horus being betrayed are found in his portrayals and he certainly did not die by crucifixion in any account. There is an incident described in one story of Horus being torn to pieces, with Iris requesting that the crocodile god pull him out of the water, but the movie does not mention this, as it does not fit their agenda. Further, the movie puts the account of Horus as originating in 3000 B.C., which predates the invention and practice of crucifixion, so there is another historical problem that must be overcome. The claims of Horus being buried for three days and resurrected are not to be found in any ancient Egyptian texts, either. Some accounts have Osiris being brought back to life by Isis and going to be the lord of the underworld. But there is no mention of a burial for three days and no mention of his physically coming out of a grave in the same physical body he went in with and never dying again. And there is certainly no account of Horus dying for others as Jesus did. In the end, the attempt to prove Horus was a picture/forerunner of Jesus simply fails from lack of any historical evidence." ([\[Is There Any Validity to the Zeitgeist Movie?\]](#))

CLAIM 11: THE SYMBOL OF THE CROSS WAS STOLEN FROM A CROSS IN THE ZODIAC

Dr. Ben Witherington says, "Mr. Joseph [producer of *Zeitgeist*] thinks it [the origin of the symbol of the cross] derives from the cross in the Zodiac imposed on the circle of the 12 astrological signs of the Zodiac. There are various problems with this theory. First of all consider the most basic ancient zodiac pattern we have-- for example in the floor of the synagogue at Sefphoris. Jews, like every other group of agrarian peoples were interested in the weather and the seasons. Do we find a cross pattern? [See the picture of the Zodiac to left]....My point is symbol. Mr. Joseph has done no first hand historical work on ancient Zodiac symbols, he has simply believed the pabulum he has imbibed from various of his out-dated, and inaccurate sources. The origin of the symbol of the cross of course derives from the Roman practice of crucifixion, not from some supposed astrological pattern. Jesus died in 30 A.D. on a cross outside of Jerusalem, a victim of Roman injustice as even the



Romans admitted." ("The Zeitgeist of the 'Zeitgeist Movie'")

CLAIM 12: THE WORKS OF JOSEPHUS ARE KNOWINGLY FRAUDULENT AND THEREFORE NOT GOOD EXTRABIBLICAL EVIDENCE OF JESUS' EXISTENCE

Dr. Ben Witherington says, "The works of Josephus are certainly not fraudulent. As is typical of Mr. Joseph [producer of *Zeitgeist*] he may have heard there are probably some Christian interpolations in the later editions of Josephus, since Christians loved and used the work, but all of the Josephus scholars I know in the guild, and there are some good ones (Greg Sterling and Steve Mason come to mind) are quite clear that these are genuine works from Josephus. The important point for our purposes is that no Josephus scholar, known to me, including Jewish ones, thinks that the passages in his works about John the Baptizer and Jesus are all later interpolations." ("The Zeitgeist of the 'Zeitgeist Movie'")



Louis Feldman, the prominent Josephus scholar and author, who is not a Christian, said, "My guess is that the ratio of those [scholars] who in some manner accept the *Testimonium* [to those who reject all of it as an interpolation] would be at least 3 to 1. I would not be surprised if it would be as much as 5 to 1." (In an email to New Testament scholar [Mike Licona](#))

CLAIM 13: THE STORY OF NOAH'S FLOOD IS PLAGIARIZED FROM OTHER

SOURCES

Joel McDurmon writes, "*Zeitegeist* tells us that the story of Noah's Ark and the Flood is not unique: The concept of a Great Flood is ubiquitous throughout the ancient world, with over 200 different cited claims in different periods and times." It is nice to see the *Zeitegeist* gang finally catching up to Christian scholars on an



issue. We have been pointing out the world-wide phenomenon of flood stories for decades now, trying to make people realize that the flood actually happened! Now *Zeitegeist* comes along and tries to use this fact against us? These guys are so eager to find parallels that they haven't stopped to think: sometimes parallels may actually work in *support* of the Bible, not against it. After all, if there really was a world-wide flood thousands of years ago, finding multiple traditions of the *same story* all over the world is *exactly what we should expect*. This is what we do find. Almost all these flood traditions record a universal flood in which only a tiny remnant of the population is saved. Some add the building of an ark and saving of the animals. Some recall the ark landing on a mountain; some the sending out of birds, etc. It only stands to reason that a few older legends, especially ones that remained geographically close to and close in language, might just have a similar tradition to that of the Bible. (*Zeitegeist The Movie Exposed... Is Jesus an Astrological Myth?*, p. 61-62)."

A SUMMARY OF SEVEN ARGUMENTS AGAINST CHRISTIAN DEPENDENCE ON MYSTERY RELIGIONS BY RON NASH:

- (1) Arguments offered to "prove" a Christian dependence on the mysteries illustrate the logical fallacy of false cause. This fallacy is committed whenever someone reasons that just because two things exist side by side, one of them must have caused the other. As we all should know, mere coincidence does not prove causal connection. Nor does similarity prove dependence.
- (2) Many alleged similarities between Christianity and the mysteries are either greatly exaggerated or fabricated. Scholars often describe pagan rituals in language they borrow from Christianity. The careless use of language could lead one to speak of a "Last Supper" in Mithraism or a "baptism" in the cult of Isis. It is inexcusable nonsense to take the word "savior" with all of its New Testament connotations and apply it to Osiris or Attis as though they were savior-gods in any similar sense.
- (3) The chronology is all wrong. Almost all of our sources of information about the pagan religions alleged to have influenced early Christianity are dated very late. We frequently find writers quoting from documents written 300 years later than Paul in efforts to produce ideas that allegedly influenced Paul. We must reject the assumption that just because a cult had a certain belief or practice in the third or fourth century after Christ, it therefore had the same belief or practice in the first century.
- (4) Paul would never have consciously borrowed from the pagan religions. All of our information about him makes it highly unlikely that he was in any sense influenced by pagan sources. He placed great emphasis on his early training in a strict form of Judaism (Phil. 3:5). He warned the Colossians against the very sort of influence that advocates of Christian syncretism have attributed to him, namely, letting their minds be captured by alien speculations (Col. 2:8).
- (5) Early Christianity was an exclusivistic faith. As J. Machen explains, the mystery cults were nonexclusive. "A man could become initiated into the mysteries of Isis or Mithras without at all giving up his former beliefs; but if he were to be received into the Church, according to the preaching of Paul, he must forsake all other Saviors for the Lord Jesus Christ.... Amid the prevailing syncretism of the Greco-Roman world, the religion of Paul, with the religion of Israel, stands absolutely alone." This Christian exclusivism should be a starting point for all reflection about the possible relations between Christianity and its pagan competitors. Any hint of syncretism in the New Testament would have caused immediate controversy.
- (6) Unlike the mysteries, the religion of Paul was grounded on events that actually happened in history. The mysticism of the mystery cults was essentially nonhistorical. Their myths were dramas, or pictures, of what the initiate went through, not real historical events, as Paul regarded Christ's death and resurrection to be. The Christian affirmation that the death and resurrection of Christ happened to a historical person at a particular

time and place has absolutely no parallel in any pagan mystery religion.

(7) What few parallels may still remain may reflect a Christian influence on the pagan systems. As Bruce Metzger has argued, "It must not be uncritically assumed that the Mysteries always influenced Christianity, for it is not only possible but probable that in certain cases, the influence moved in the opposite direction." [22] It should not be surprising that leaders of cults that were being successfully challenged by Christianity should do something to counter the challenge. What better way to do this than by offering a pagan substitute? Pagan attempts to counter the growing influence of Christianity by imitating it are clearly apparent in measures instituted by Julian the Apostate, who was the Roman emperor from A.D. 361 to 363. (Excerpted from his article "[Was the New Testament Influenced by Pagan Religions](#)" that first appeared in the *Christian Research Journal*, Winter, 1994).

OTHER MISCELLANEOUS QUOTES:

Dr. Ronald Nash says, "It is not until we come to the third century A.D. that we find sufficient source material (i.e., information about the mystery religions from the writings of the time) to permit a relatively complete reconstruction of their content. Far too many writers use this late source material (after A.D. 200) to form reconstructions of the third-century mystery experience and then uncritically reason back to what they think must have been the earlier nature of the cults. This practice is exceptionally bad scholarship and should not be allowed to stand without challenge. Information about a cult that comes several hundred years after the close of the New Testament canon must not be read back into what is presumed to be the status of the cult during the first century A.D. The crucial question is not what possible influence the mysteries may have had on segments of Christendom after A.D. 400, but what effect the emerging mysteries may have had on the New Testament in the first century." (Article "[Was the New Testament Influenced by Pagan Religions](#)")

Dr. Ronald Nash says, "Many Christian college students have encountered criticisms of Christianity based on claims that early Christianity and the New Testament borrowed important beliefs and practices from a number of pagan mystery religions. Since these claims undermine such central Christian doctrines as Christ's death and resurrection, the charges are serious. But the evidence for such claims, when it even exists, often lies in sources several centuries [after] the New Testament. Moreover, the alleged parallels often result from liberal scholars uncritically describing pagan beliefs and practices in Christian language and then marveling at the striking parallels they think they've discovered." (Article "[Was the New Testament Influenced by Pagan Religions](#)")

OTHER RELATED ARTICLES ADDRESSING ZEITGEIST CLAIMS:

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["The Zeitgeist of the 'Zeitgeist Movie'"](#) by Ben Witherington

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[*The Christ Conspiracy* is the main source of information in *Zeitgeist*.]

["Christianity, the Resurrection of Christ and the Mystery Religions"](#) by Dr. John Ankerberg and Dr. John Weldon

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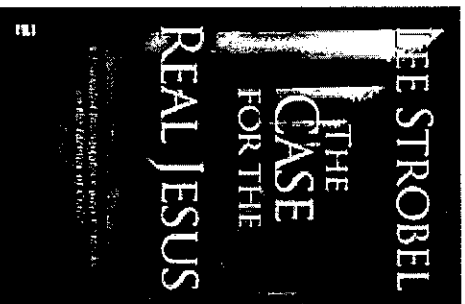
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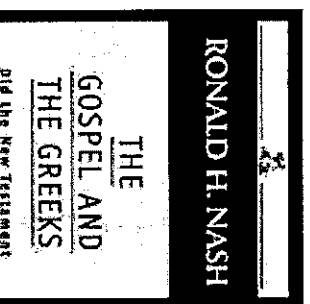
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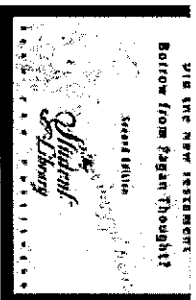
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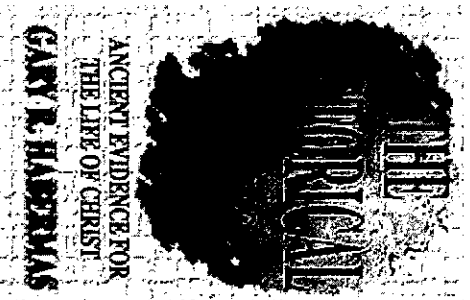


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