
- **Zeitgeist Movie Rebuttal to Its Attack on Jesus Christ**

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- **The first 37 minutes of the Zeitgeist movie is one of the most ludicrous, damnable, unbiblical deceptions that Satan has ever concocted.** This movie takes some (mostly inaccurate, easily debunkable) pagan history and tries to apply it to Jesus Christ. Satan is the great counterfeiter and now he is attempting to portray Jesus as just one more pagan deity that Catholicism repackaged into pseudo Christianity around 318 AD by the first Pope Constantine. The purpose of this article is to address the first theory (out of four) put forth in the movie – that Jesus is a mythological amalgamation of various pagan gods and deities that were invented by the Egyptians, Catholics and other cultures. The allegations concerning Jesus Christ in the Zeitgeist movie can be summarized as follows: The Jesus proclaimed in the Bible is not a historical person, **and in fact He never even existed;** unbelievably asserting that the Jesus Christ found in the pages of the New Testament gospels is an invention of the Biblical authors who painstakingly copied attributes of ancient pagan deities and created a new god to be worshipped. Further, the movie asserts that astrology is the foundation behind much of the writing in Scripture. The end conclusion is that Christianity is a myth just as all the pagan religions that came before it and therefore is untrue. All these blasphemous theories are thoroughly refuted in this teaching.

- <http://www.gotquestions.org/zeitgeist-movie.html>

To address these assertions, it is helpful to break them up into three groups:

- The subject of astrology and the Bible.
- The supposed similarities between Jesus and mythological heroes.
- The evidence for the truthfulness of the gospel accounts.

The zeitgeist (the name is German and means `the spirit of the age` or literally `time (Zeit) "spirit" (Geist)) movie places great emphasis on how the Bible is based on astrology and the stars. Perhaps one of the most telling statements in all the Bible regarding the importance God places on the stars is found in Genesis 1:16b: READ Some biblical commentators have said this brevity of description is deliberate as God wants to in no way give the stars significance. In truth, rather than giving the stars, sun, and moon any value over what they were created for, there are a number of places in Scripture that denounce their worship. Deuteronomy 4:19 says, READ In fact, Deuteronomy 17:2-5 READ prescribes a death sentence for anyone found worshipping the creation rather than the Creator. In Isaiah 47:13 READ God mockingly asks if the star gazers can actually protect those who follow them from the real Power of the universe. So the claim the zeitgeist movie makes about the Bible being

based and grounded on astrology goes against what is written in the actual Book itself.

In addition to the general faulty concept of astrology and the Bible being joined at the hip, the specific statements made in the film about this supposed link reflect a disregard for historical facts. For example, the movie states that the number “12” in the Bible refers to the 12 zodiacal signs. So the 12 patriarchs, 12 tribes of Israel, 12 disciples of Jesus, etc., are supposed to match the number of the astrological signs. This is out of the realm of possibility as Genesis was written around 1,000 B.C. with the actual events having occurred even earlier. History shows that the division of the stars/constellations into the 12 zodiacal signs did not occur until the Babylonians made the divisions around the fifth century B.C. so the timing is off.

The meatier part of the first section of the movie is devoted to allegations of Jesus being nothing but a combination of pagan deity attributes that the gospel writers borrowed to create their own new god. For this short refutation, focus will be given to what appears to be the major authority used in this portion of the movie and the first major mythological figure presented as a forerunner of Jesus – Horus – using the logic that if the research on their primary character is flawed, it is likely the same faulty investigation methods/materials will be present in everything else that follows. Also note that it is the absence of documented scholarly material supporting the movie’s stance that challenges the position stated in the film.

The zeitgeist movie makes these claims about the Egyptian god Horus:

- He was born on December 25th of a virgin - Isis Mary
 - A star in the East proclaimed his arrival
- Three kings came to adore the new-born “savior”
 - He became a prodigal teacher at age 12
- At age 30 he was “baptized” and began a “ministry”
 - Horus had twelve “disciples”
 - Horus was betrayed
 - He was crucified
 - He was buried for three days
- He was resurrected after three days

If true, this would certainly be unsettling to followers of Christ. However, walking through each point in detail is quite revealing. First, it is true that Egyptian legend has Horus being born to Isis. But the trailing name of “Mary” used in the movie – where did that come from? No mention in any Egyptian literature links the name Isis to the actual name “Mary.” Isis was also not a virgin. Neither account of Horus’ birth makes this statement – instead readers are told Isis was not a virgin, but the widow of Osiris, another Egyptian god who supposedly conceived Horus with Isis after he was dead

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 - **You Probably Know This Woman!**
 - Issue Date: January/February 2007
 - By David W. Daniels
- To the Aztecs, she was known as Tlazolteotl (TLAS-ohl-tay-OH-tul), the goddess of filth, gambling,

prostitution and witchcraft, among other things. She was also known to the Aztecs as Coatlicue (co-AT-li-KWAY).

- She was the goddess of the moon and of the morning/evening star (Venus). People who spoke different languages called her by other names. Some of them are Hecate, Astarte, Aphrodite, Venus, Isis, Semiramis and Ishtar (The fertility goddess which is where we derive the word Easter). Note: Easter is the first Sunday after the first new moon of another pagan holiday known as Ostara which March or 21st or 22nd. The Goddess Ostara (AKA: Ishtar), for whom "Easter" is named -- Ostara as well as Easter is one of the Illuminati's Human Sacrifice Nights
 - She is also known as the Roman Catholic "Virgin Mary" goddess.
- Her son had many names as well. Some of them are Horus, Harpocrates, Mithras, Sol Invictus, Hercules, Attis and Tammuz. What do these god-babies have in common? Well, for one, they were all supposedly born on December 25th. Which is where we derive the pagan celebration of Christmas from, which was originally known by the Romans as Saturnalia. December 21-22 -- Winter Solstice/Yule. One of the Illuminati's Human Sacrifice Nights December 21- 22 -- Yule -- When the sun begins its northward trek in the sky, and days began to grow longer again, pagans celebrated the Winter Solstice by burning the Yule log. Since the sun had reversed itself and was now rising in the sky, pagans believed this was a sign that the human sacrifices carried out in Samhain (Halloween) had been accepted by the gods. The Roman Catholic Church later changed the day of celebration to December 25, calling it Christmas. Roman Catholicism is a demonic blend of ancient pagan religions made to look like Christianity.
 - B. -- Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the Church. It was not celebrated, commemorated, or observed, neither by the apostles nor in the apostolic church -- not for at least the first 300 years of church history! History reveals that about 440 A.D., the Church at Jerusalem commenced the celebration of Christmas, following the lead of Roman Catholicism. It was sufficient for the early Christians that Jesus, their Lord and Savior, had been born. They praised God that Jesus Christ had, indeed, come in the flesh. The day and the time of His birth had no relevance to them, because Jesus was no longer physically on earth. He had returned to heaven. And it was the risen, exalted Christ to whom they looked, and that by faith -- not a babe laid in a manger. Jesus Christ is no longer a baby; no longer the "Christ-child," but the exalted Lord of all.
 - Hosea 4:6&7: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.
- As they were increased, so they sinned against me: therefore will I change their glory into shame."

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C. Seemingly forgotten is the essential role religion played in the world of ancient Rome. But the Emperor Constantine understood. By giving official status to Christianity, he brought internal peace to the Empire. A brilliant military commander, he also had the genius to recognize that after declaring Christianity the "state" religion (Constantine forced all the pagans of his empire to be baptized into the Roman Church), there was need for true union between paganism and Christianity. The corrupt Roman Church was full of pagans now masquerading as Christians, all of which had to be pacified. What better way than to "Christianize" their pagan idolatries. Thus, the Babylonian mystery religions

were introduced by Constantine beginning in 313 A.D. (and established a foothold with the holding of the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D.). The Constantine-led Roman Church was more than willing to adapt and adopt pagan practices in order to make Christianity palatable to the heathen. Constantine used religion as a political tool, totally devoid of any true spirituality:

Pagan rituals and idols took on Christian names (e.g., Jesus Christ was presented as the Sun of Righteousness [Malachi 4:2] replacing the sun god, Horus, Tammuz, Sol Invictus).

Pagan holidays were reclassified as Christian holidays (holy-days).

December 25th was the "Victory of the Sun-God" Festival in the pagan Babylonian world. In the ancient Roman Empire, the celebration can be traced back to the Roman festival Saturnalia, which honored Saturn, the harvest god, and Mithras, the god of light; both were celebrated during or shortly after the winter solstice (between the 17th and 23rd of December). To all ancient pagan civilizations, December 25th was the birthday of the gods -- the time of year when the days began to lengthen and man was blessed with a "regeneration of nature." Moreover, all of December 25th's Babylonian and Roman festivals were characterized by 5-7 day celebration periods of unrestrained promiscuous revelry and licentiousness.

In order to make Christianity palatable to the heathen, the Roman Church simply took Saturnalia, adopted it into Christianity, and then eventually many of the associated pagan symbols, forms, customs, and traditions were reinterpreted (or "Christianized") in ways "acceptable" to lukewarm Christian faith and practice. (In fact, in 375 A.D., the Church of Rome under Pope Julius I merely announced that the birth date of Christ had been "discovered" to be December 25th, and was accepted as such by the "faithful." The festival of Saturnalia and the birthday of Mithras could now be celebrated as the birthday of Christ!) The pagans flocked into the Catholic places of worship, because they were still able to worship their old gods, but merely under different names. It mattered not to them whether they worshiped the Egyptian goddess mother and her child under the old names (Isis and Horus), or under the names of the "Virgin Mary" and the "Christ-child." Either way, it was the same old idol-religion (cf. 1 Thes. 1:8-10; 5:22 -- Paul says to turn from idols, not rename them and Christianize them). Roman Catholicism's Christmas Day is nothing but "baptized" paganism, having come along much too late to be part of "the faith once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

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- **Was Jesus born on December 25th or early September?**

- Luke 1:5-25 is the record of the [angel's](#) announcement to Zecharias that he and his wife, Elizabeth, would have a son, whom they were to call John. Zechariah and Elizabeth were quite elderly, and had no children, and the angel gave them the wonderful news that they would have a son, to be named John. Verses 23 and 24 tell us that when Zechariah finished his service in the Temple, he returned home (which would have been in early June). Upon his return, Elizabeth became pregnant. Verse 26 then says that in her sixth month of pregnancy (December), the angel Gabriel came to Mary to tell her that she was about to become pregnant with the Son of God. Nine months later would have been September.
- How else do we know that Jesus was not born in the Winter? Luke 2:8 speaks about the shepherds near Bethlehem who were in the fields, watching their flocks at night. Shepherds in that region did not keep their sheep out at night during the Winter because it was cold and sometimes even snowy, but they did keep them in the fields during the Fall, after the end-of-Summer harvest. At that time, the sheep could eat the stalks of grain left over after the harvest, and they would then fertilize the ground prior to the late Fall planting.

- Also, Luke 2:1 says that when Mary was just about to give birth to Jesus, she and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem to fulfill their obligation to be counted in a Roman census. They did not travel in the Winter because it would have been much too hard. Rather, people traveled in the Fall, between the heat of Summer and the cold of Winter. And at that time of year the grain, and also some fruit, were ripe, and travelers were allowed to eat some of the “gleanings”—Lev. 23:22) as they passed by....
 - <http://www.truthorthatradition.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=467>

- **Continuing...**

Next, the film states that a star in the East announced his birth and that three kings came to bring gifts to the “savior.” However, when stories detailing the birth of Horus are examined, there is no star or three kings who come to visit him. Trying to link this to Christianity fails in any event as the account of Christ’s birth in Matthew has magi (wise men, not kings) coming to Jesus with their actual number not being stated. Finally, the movie calls Horus a “savior.” There are no descriptions of Horus being a savior to anyone or serving in that capacity.

This is an important point: the movie takes extreme unsubstantiated liberty in the quick and subtle uses of Christian words and phrases that in no way accurately describe the actual pagan god or attribute being discussed. This is seen again in the statements made of Horus being “baptized” and starting a “ministry.” The only accounts remotely related to Horus and water are the stories told of Osiris (his father who is sometimes combined in ancient accounts with Horus to form one individual) whose body was cut up into 14 pieces by his enemy Set and scattered throughout the earth. Isis supposedly found each part of the body (except the phallus) & became the lord of the underworld, depending on which account is read. In any event, stating that Horus was “baptized” is simply playing fast and loose with Christian terminology.

In addition, Horus had no “ministry.” Horus becoming a teacher at age 12 (mimicking Jesus’ account at the temple as a youth) is nowhere to be found in accounts of Horus; neither are there any statements to the effect of him having twelve “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 Isis requesting that the crocodile god fish him out of the water he was placed into, but the movie does not mention this as it does not fit in with their agenda. Further, the movie puts the account of Horus as originating in 3,000 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 account of Horus being buried for three days and then rising again from the dead and then ascending into heaven. 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. The movie continues in this same vein with all the other mythological pagan

deities that pre-dated Jesus (Attis, Krishna, etc.) As just another simple example, the zeitgeist movie says that Hindu's Krishna was also crucified and resurrected. However, Hindu teachings clearly state that Krishna was killed by an arrow shot from a hunter who accidentally hit him in his heel and after he died, he then ascended to be with Brahman. None of the pagan deities, when accurately examined, mirror the Son of God recorded in the New Testament gospels.

Of course, neither does the movie note the following facts:

- The many archaeological details confirming New Testament accounts.
- The historically confirmed references that run alongside the life of Christ.
- The early dating of the gospel accounts, during the lifetime of the eyewitnesses.
 - The deep moral convictions of the authors and their commitment to truth.
 - The accounts of the apostles going to their deaths for what they had seen.
- The typology of Joseph and Jesus (used by the film to supposedly debunk the actual existence of Christ) is very well known and accepted by conservative Christian scholars as a foreshadowing of the first coming of Jesus.
 - All the good produced by Christianity (see "How Christianity Changed the World" by Dr. Alvin Schmidt), which are brushed aside with only the catholic atrocities, crusades and other like events being highlighted.

This is in keeping with the current militant atheist mindset of there only being violence in religion. Of course, violence done in the name of atheism/naturalism is not mentioned in the movie. Perhaps most overlooked is the fact that Jesus birth, life, and death were prophesied hundreds of years in advance in the Old Testament, which was written by monotheistic Jews who certainly would not have borrowed aspects from pagan cults for their work. The person and life of Jesus as lived out by the historically verified Nazarene carpenter is nothing more than an unfolding of what had been predicted by the prophets of the Old Testament years before.

It is interesting to note that the person of Jesus and Christianity is the only faith attacked in the movie – Islam, Hinduism, and others don't warrant a mention. Though the faith of the producers is not exposed, there is a blurb at the end speaking to the effect that "all is one," with a clip of noted evolutionist / materialist Carl Sagan being shown who says that the earth is a single organism and that a "new consciousness is developing" that shows all is one.

At the end of the movie, religion is called a distraction engineered by a secret group of people who are using it (along with the media and other mechanisms) to dumb down the population so they will accept with open arms a coming one world government. It is interesting that this appears to be the movie producer's main fear – a one world government. This is the one proposition put forth by the movie that is plausible insofar as it is backed by prophetic statements made in both the Old and New Testaments - Daniel, 1&2 Thessalonians, and Revelation (assuming an eschatological stance such as pre-millennialism, etc.) – that speak to the ambition of a predicted world ruler who is to come.

It is interesting also that the movie quotes Jesus – someone they say never existed – from John 8:32: "you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free," although they misquote it and say "you must seek the truth and the truth will set you free." The producers of the zeitgeist movie unfortunately do not do this and instead choose to align themselves with very questionable and outright fabricated sources to malign Christianity and label it and all religions as a pawn being used by a secret organization they claim is currently working to take over the world. One thing is for certain – reaching

such a conclusion using faulty materials certainly requires a lot of faith. Much more faith, in fact, than it takes to accept the truth and historical validity of Christianity.

Christians should not be surprised that such unfounded claims are invented in the imaginations of unbelievers and passed along by others as fact, and in reality, they are expected. Peter writes in his first epistle, READ (2 Peter 2:1).

[\[link to www.gotquestions.org\]](http://www.gotquestions.org)

- **Question: "Did Jesus really exist? Is there any historical evidence of Jesus Christ?"**

Answer: Typically when this question is asked, the person asking qualifies the question with "outside of the Bible." We do not grant this idea that the Bible cannot be considered a source of evidence for the existence of Jesus. The New Testament contains hundreds of references to Jesus Christ. There are those who date the writing of the Gospels in the second century A.D., 100+ years after Jesus' death. Even if this were the case (which we strongly dispute), in terms of ancient evidences, writings less than 200 years after events took place are considered very reliable evidences. Further, the vast majority of scholars (Christian and non-Christian) will grant that the Epistles of Paul were in fact written by Paul in the middle of the first century A.D., less than 40 years after Jesus' death. In terms of ancient manuscript evidence, this is extraordinarily strong proof of the existence Jesus Christ in Israel in the early first century A.D.

It is also important to recognize that in 70 A.D., the Romans invaded and destroyed Jerusalem and most of Israel, slaughtering its inhabitants. Entire cities were literally burned to the ground! We should not be surprised, then, if much evidence of Jesus' existence was destroyed. Many of the eye-witnesses of Jesus would have been killed. These facts likely limited the amount of surviving eyewitness testimony of Jesus.

Considering the fact that Jesus' ministry was largely confined to a relatively unimportant area in a small corner of the Roman Empire, a surprising amount of information about Jesus can be drawn from secular historical sources. Some of the more important historical evidences of Jesus include the following:

The first-century Roman Tacitus, who is considered one of the more accurate historians of the ancient world, mentioned superstitious "Christians" ("named after Christus" which is Latin for Christ), who suffered under Pontius Pilate during the reign of Tiberius. Suetonius, chief secretary to Emperor Hadrian, wrote that there was a man named Chrestus (or Christ) who lived during the first century (Annals 15.44).

Flavius Josephus is the most famous Jewish historian. In his Antiquities he refers to James, "the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ." There is a controversial verse (18:3) that says, "Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man. For he was one who wrought surprising feats. . . . He was [the] Christ . . . he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him." One version reads, "At this time there was a wise man named Jesus. His conduct was good and [he] was known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and the other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. But those who became his disciples did not

abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion, and that he was alive; accordingly he was perhaps the Messiah, concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders."

Julius Africanus quotes the historian Thallus in a discussion of the darkness which followed the crucifixion of Christ (Extant Writings, 18).

Pliny the Younger, in Letters 10:96, recorded early Christian worship practices including the fact that Christians worshiped Jesus as God and were very ethical, and includes a reference to the and Lord's Supper.

The Babylonian Talmud (Sanhedrin 43a) confirms Jesus' crucifixion on the eve of Passover, and the accusations against Christ of practicing sorcery and encouraging Jewish apostasy.

Lucian of Samosata was a second-century Greek writer who admits that Jesus was worshiped by Christians, introduced new teachings, and was crucified for them. He said that Jesus' teachings included the brotherhood of believers, the importance of conversion, and the importance of denying other gods. Christians lived according to Jesus' laws, ... and were characterized by contempt for death, voluntary self-devotion, and renunciation of material goods.

Mara Bar-Serapion confirms that Jesus was thought to be a wise and virtuous man, was considered by many to be the king of Israel, was put to death by the Jews, and lived on in the teachings of his followers.

Then we have all the Gnostic writings (The Gospel of Truth, The Apocryphon of John, The Gospel of Thomas, The Treatise on Resurrection, etc.) that all mention Jesus.

In fact, we can almost reconstruct the gospel just from early non-Christian sources: Jesus was called the Christ (Josephus), led Israel into new teachings, and was hanged on Passover for them (Babylonian Talmud) in Judea (Tacitus), but claimed to be God and would return (Eliezar), which his followers believed - worshipping Him as God (Pliny the Younger).

In conclusion, there is overwhelming evidence for the existence of Jesus Christ, both in secular and Biblical history. Perhaps the greatest evidence that Jesus did exist is the fact that literally thousands of Christians in the first century A.D., including the 12 apostles, were willing to give their lives as martyrs for Jesus Christ. People will die for what they believe to be true, but no one will die for what they know to be a lie.

Recommended Resource: [Case for Faith / Case for Christ by Lee Strobel](#).

- **The Law of Probability:**

After examining only forty eight different prophecies (even though he could have used 456) Professor Emeritus of Science at Westmont College, Peter Stoner, has calculated the probability of one man fulfilling the major prophecies made concerning Jesus Christ. (see Stoner, Peter W. Science Speaks. Chicago: Moody Press, 1963) Bear in mind these Old Testament prophecies were written by different unrelated authors of the Bible, hundreds to thousands of years earlier. Twelve different classes of 600 college students worked out the estimates. The students carefully weighed all the factors,

discussed each prophecy at length, and examined the various circumstances, which might indicate that men had conspired together to fulfill a particular prophecy. They made their estimates conservative enough so that there was finally unanimous agreement among even the most skeptical students. Not only that, but when Professor Stoner took their estimates and made them even more conservative, he also encouraged other skeptics and scientist to make their own estimates to prove that his conclusions were more than fair.

- Finally, he submitted his figures for review to a Committee of the American Scientific Affiliation. Upon examination, they verified that his calculations were dependable and accurate in regard to the scientific material presented. For example, concerning Micah 5:2, where it states that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, Stoner and his students determined the average population of Bethlehem from the time of Micah to the present; then they divided it by the average population of the earth during the same period. They concluded that the chance of one man being born in Bethlehem was one in 2.8×10 to the 5th power - or rounded, one in 300,000.

In the final calculation Stoner used 48 prophecies (even though he could have used 456) and arrived at the extremely conservative estimate that the probability of 48 prophecies being fulfilled in one person is 10 to 157th power. How large is the number 10 to the 157th power? 10 to the 157th power contains 157 zeros!

Let us try to illustrate this number using electrons... Electrons are very small objects. They are smaller than atoms. It would take 2.5 times 10 to the 15th power of them, laid side by side, to make one inch. Even if we counted four electrons every second and counted day and night, it would still take us 19 million years just to count a line of electrons one-inch long. How many electrons would there be if we were dealing with 10 to the 157th power of electrons?

Imagine building a solid ball of electrons that would extend in all directions from the earth of 6 billion light years. The distance in miles of just one light year is 6.4 trillion miles. That would be a big ball! But not big enough to measure 10 to the 157th power of electrons! In order to do that, you must take that big ball of electrons reaching the length of 6 billion light years long in all directions and multiply it by 6×10 to the 28th power! How big is that? It's the length of the space required to store trillions and trillions and trillions of the same gigantic balls and more. In fact the space required to store all of these balls combined together would just start to "scratch the surface" of the number of electrons we would need to really accurately speak about 10 to the 157th power!


Assuming you have some idea of the number of electrons we are talking about; imagine marking just one of those electrons in that huge number. Stirring them all up. Then appointing one person to travel in a rocket for as long as he wants, anywhere he wants to go. Now tell him to stop the rocket in space, take a high-powered microscope, and find that one marked electron. What do you think his chances of being successful would be? It would be one in 10 to the 157th power. Remember; this number represents the chances of only 48 prophecies coming true regarding Jesus Christ (whereas he could of used 456 prophecies). In financial terms, is there anyone who would not invest in a financial venture if the chance of failure were only one in 10 to the 157th power?

- This kind of sure investment we are offered by God for belief in Jesus Christ the Messiah. All this illustrates why it is absolutely impossible for anyone to have fulfilled the Messianic prophecies by chance. This is the kind of evidence that proves there must be a God who supernaturally gave us this information. Let's keep in mind that we've only illustrated 48 out of over 456 Messianic prophecies, out of over 8000 total verses in Bible prophecy, of which thousands of verses have been fulfilled already.
- Also remember that these prophecies were written anywhere from hundreds to thousands of years earlier, by different unrelated men that lived (for the most part) in totally different time eras. Jesus Christ's life is a historical fact. His birth year is how we divide time, evidenced by using the term

B.C.(Before Christ) in our dating method. There were many other confirmations of Jesus Christ's existence by various record keepers of his era. So if you have not already done so, please accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and receive his free gift of salvation today. There is no more important decision than you will ever make. To take that step and/or for as small sampling of some of the prophecies mentioned see below, or go to:


http://www.chick.com/reading/tracts/0005/0005_01.asp

- Note: The argument has been made that Jesus deliberately fulfilled these prophecies, but most of the prophecies were completely beyond His control such as: His place of birth (Micah 5:2), the time of His birth (Daniel 9:25; Genesis 49:10), the manner of His birth (Isaiah 7:14), His betrayal (Psalms 41:9, Zechariah 11:12, 11:13b), the manner of his death (Psalms 22:16), people's reactions (mocking, spitting, staring, etc...) (Isaiah 50:6, Micah 5:1, Psalms 22:7,8, Isaiah 53:3, Psalms 69:8, Psalms 118:22, Psalms 69:4, Isaiah 49:7, Psalms 38:11, Psalms 22:7, Psalms 109:25, Psalms 22:17), piercing (Zechariah 12:10, Psalms 22:16) and burial (Isaiah 53:9).
- Another argument is that the prophecies were written at or after the time of Jesus and were therefore fabricated. The problem with this argument was that the historic date of completion of the Old Testament is 450 BC and the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, was initiated in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-246 BC). The Hebrew Old Testament must have been available in its entirety for it to be translated commencing at 250 BC.

 Jesus, the Creator, fulfilled over 30 prophecies when He allowed Himself to be murdered by man. (John 18-21)			
PROPHECY	FULFILLMENT	PROPHECY	FULFILLMENT
Genesis 3:15	John 19:18	Psalms 69:21	Matthew 27:34
Exodus 12:46	John 19:36	Psalms 109:25	Matthew 27:39
Psalms 2:2	Mark 15:1	Isaiah 50:6	Matthew 26:67
Psalms 22:1	Matthew 27:46	Isaiah 53:3	John 1:11
Psalms 22:6	Matthew 27:39-44	Isaiah 53:5,6,10	Romans 5:6,8
Psalms 22:7-8	Matthew 27:39-44	Isaiah 53:7	Matthew 27:13-14
Psalms 22:16	John 19:18	Isaiah 53:7	Matthew 26:62-63
Psalms 22:17	Matthew 27:36	Isaiah 53:8	Mark 15:1-25
Psalms 22:18	Matthew 27:35	Isaiah 53:9	Matthew 27:57-60
Psalms 31:5	Luke 23:46	Isaiah 53:12	Mark 15:27-28
Psalms 34:20	John 19:32-33 & 36	Daniel 9:26	Matthew 26:24
Psalms 35:11	Mark 14:56	Amos 8:9	Matthew 27:45
Psalms 38:11	Luke 23:49	Zechariah 11:13	Matthew 27:9
Psalms 41:9	John 13:18	Zechariah 12:10	John 19:34
Psalms 69:19	Matthew 27:28-29	Zechariah 13:7	Mark 14:27,50

THE BIBLE SAYS THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO HEAVEN!

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." John 14:6

<p align="center">NOBODY ELSE CAN SAVE YOU. TRUST JESUS TODAY!</p> <p>"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Rom. 10:9</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Admit you are a sinner. See Romans 3:10 2. Be willing to turn from sin (repent). See Acts 17:30 3. Believe that Jesus Christ died for you, was buried and rose from the dead. See Rom. 10:9-10 4. Through prayer, invite Jesus into your life to become your personal Saviour. See Rom. 10:13 <p>WHAT TO PRAY</p> <p>Dear God, I am a sinner and need forgiveness. I believe that Jesus Christ shed His precious blood and died for my sin. I am willing to turn from sin. I now invite Christ to come into my heart and life as my personal Saviour.</p>	<p><i>If you trusted Jesus as your Saviour, you have just begun a wonderful new life with Him. Now:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read your Bible every day to get to know Jesus Christ better. 2. Talk to God in prayer every day. 3. Be baptized, worship, fellowship, and serve with other Christians in a church where Christ is preached and the Bible is the final authority. 4. Tell others about Jesus Christ. <p>Here's help to grow as a new Christian! Read The Next Step, available at Christian bookstores or from Chick Publications.</p> 
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Zeitgeist Movie: Is Christianity a Recycled Version of other Pagan Myths?

UPDATED BELOW

This site is usually devoted to serious academic issues. But I've been hearing a lot lately about the claims made in a recent movie called *Zeitgeist* (2007) and I feel like I've got to deal with some of the issues here. The (first 37 minutes) movie "demonstrates" how Christianity is merely a recycled version of pagan myths about ancient deities such as the Egyptian god Horus.

I've been getting emails about this--here's one example:

...My friend asked me to look at this video, he stopped practicing Christianity because of it.

It claims that Jesus never existed but rather He was made up for political reasons; to control the population.

It relates the life of Jesus with other "gods", and that the Bible is more astrological than anything else.

What do you think of all the claims in it?

Below is my response. But for more reading on this topic I want to encourage anyone dealing with this stuff to check out: <http://www.tektonics.org/copycat/copycathub.html> which is full of great articles on the topic.

By the way, if it sounds like I'm a little upset, I am! I can't believe how disingenuous people can be. And I'm deeply saddened that people are falling for it.

I don't know where to start: this video is a complete lie.

First off, the video is full of misinformation about Horus. He was baptized? Oh really! I would love to see a source for that!

Most of the supposed parallels are completely untrue!

Actually, Muslim apologists have been trying to do this for centuries--to say that Christianity is really just another form of paganism. But that's a lie.

Most of the information in this video seems to come from Acharya S's book, *The Christ Conspiracy* (1999), which is a sensationalist book which has zero academic credibility. If you want to learn about Horus you can read the ancient myths about him--

Encyclopedia Mythica: Horus: <http://www.pantheon.org/articles/h/horus.html>

Tektonics: Horus, Isis, Osiris: <http://tektonics.org/copycat/osy.html>

Let's go over just some of the data:

1. Horus was not born of a Virgin--that's a lie.
 2. Horus was not baptized. That's a complete fabrication. "Anup the Baptizer"?--show me where you find that!
-

That's a lie.

3. Horus never walked on water. He performed miracles, but raising the dead and walking on water were not among them. Nor did he cast out demons.

4. Horus had disciples--but you can't show me a single reference to his having twelve. That's a lie.

5. Horus never taught in the temple at age 12. That's a lie. Read the accounts above--it's not there.

6. Where was ever said that was Horus crucified? That's a lie! He died in a later version of the story and was brought back to life--but Jesus' "resurrection" was more than a mere coming back to life. His body was transformed and changed. Anyways, it was only later added to the Horus legend.

That's just off the top of my head. That should give you some indication though about the reliability of this film. In short, its claims are lies that are told to sell books. But no scholar in the world would accept this stuff--only the ignorant. Anybody can get a book published or a video made and say whatever they want. That doesn't make it true.

Moreover, to think that Jesus didn't exist is absolutely, positively unfounded, unhistorical, and unrealistic.

Those who opposed Christianity from the very beginning never asserted that Jesus didn't exist--in fact, they made all kinds of slanderous claims against Jesus. But they never asserted he was a myth.

In fact, there's more evidence Jesus existed than virtually any one else in antiquity.

... and there isn't a single respectable scholar today--Christian or secular--who would make such a claim. Only those who haven't studied the issue seriously could say such a thing.

UPDATE

Another person explained that the sources for the movie have been posted on-line. Follow the link and--what a shocker!--the primary source for the movie's claims about Jesus and Christianity is said to be Acharya S's book, *The Christ Conspiracy* (1999). Again, this book is NOT an academic work and has ZERO credibility. According to this very site, one of S's sources is said to be John Allegro--a man whose work has frequently been condemned by scholars.

Note: For a full rebuttal to the "The Christ Conspiracy" book go to:

<http://www.answerinfidels.com/answering-skeptics/answering-acharya-s/>

For example, when John Allegro attempted to publish a translation of the Dead Sea Scrolls, fourteen Oxford scholars wrote to the publisher and demanded it be pulled--it was an absolutely inaccurate translation! The book was pulled and the publisher even apologized! A critique was written by John Strugnell, which meticulously revealed in a line-by-line treatment the errors and which was longer than Allegro's book itself! [See "Notes en marge du volume V des 'Discoveries in the Judaean Desert of Jordon'" in *Revue de Qumran* 7 (1963): 163-76. For more on the debacle see, James VanderKam and Peter Flint, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2002), 381-403.]

The fact is, no scholar takes Allegro's work seriously. You will only see his name mentioned in academic journals such as the *Journal for the Historical Jesus* (not a particularly conservative journal!) in articles listing the most outrageous examples of poor scholarship.

Of course, you won't find scholars quoting from S's book either.

Again, read the ancient sources themselves and see what they say about Horus--he was not baptized, crucified, etc. It may sell movies and it may appeal to those who already want to dismiss Christianity, but the Jesus-Horus comparison has really no academic value whatsoever.

Posted by Michael Barber

A Refutation of Acharya S's book, *The Christ Conspiracy*

By Mike Licona

<http://www.answeringinfidels.com/answering-skeptics/answering-acharya-s/a-refutation-of-acharya-s-book-the-christ-conspiracy-pt-1.html>

Acharya S is a skeptic with an interest in mythology who has written a book entitled *The Christ Conspiracy: The Greatest Story Ever Sold*. This book presents an hypothesis of how Christianity came into being. Although it has received no attention from scholarship, with the lone exception of a negative book review and that from an atheist scholar,(1) *The Christ Conspiracy* has nonetheless gained support from a number of laypersons. The occasion for this paper is to assess Murdock's major claims in a brief manner in terms of their accuracy and whether her book is a worthwhile contribution on the origin of Christianity. The paper will sample some of her major claims. No attempts will be made to defend the Christian worldview.

Acharya means "guru" or "teacher." Her actual name is D. Murdock.(2) Throughout the remainder of this paper, this author will be referred to as Ms. Murdock. The thesis of *The Christ Conspiracy* is that pagans and Jews who were Masons from the first and second centuries got together and invented the account of Jesus and his disciples in order to create a religion which it was hoped would serve as a one-world religion for the Roman empire. This religion would be a collage of all of the other world religions and combined with astrology.

This, of course, is a radical and unorthodox picture of Christianity. However, being radical and unorthodox does not invalidate a view. Notwithstanding, if Ms. Murdock's picture of Christianity is to be believed as correct, she has to be accurate in her assessment of the details of the other religions she cites in terms of their similarities with Christianity, correct in her assessment of ancient astrology, correct in her peculiar datings of the Gospels, and correct concerning the Masons. If she is incorrect on any one of these, her hypothesis must be altered or abandoned. It is when we look at the areas of astrology, comparative religion, New Testament higher criticism, Freemasonry, and other issues, we find her to be incorrect in every one of these areas.

1. Astrology

Ms. Murdock claims that as myth developed, "it took the form of a play, with a cast of characters, including the 12 divisions of the sky called the signs or constellations of the zodiac. The symbols that typified these 12 celestial sections of 300 each were not based on what the constellations actually look like but represent aspects of earthly life. Thus, the ancient peoples were able to incorporate these earthly aspects into the mythos and project them onto the all-important celestial screen."(3) Based on this understanding, she claims that the mythical Jesus recognized the coming of the age of Pisces; thus, the Christian fish.(4)

Is it true that astrology played a large part in the formation of Christianity as Ms. Murdock asserts? Noel

Swerdlow is Professor of Astronomy and Astrophysics at the University of Chicago. He has specialized in the study of the practice of astronomy in antiquity through the 17th century. I emailed Dr. Swerdlow on this matter. Here is what he had to say on Ms. Murdock's view:

In antiquity, constellations were just groups of stars, and there were no borders separating the region of one from the region of another. In astrology, for computational purposes the zodiacal signs were taken as twelve arcs of 30 degrees measured from the vernal equinox. Because of the slow westward motion of the equinoxes and solstices, what we call the precession of the equinoxes, these did not correspond to the constellations with the same names. But . . . within which group of stars the vernal equinox was located, was of no astrological significance at all. The modern ideas about the Age of Pisces or the Age of Aquarius are based upon the location of the vernal equinox in the regions of the stars of those constellations. But the regions, the borders between, those constellations are a completely modern convention of the International Astronomical Union for the purpose of mapping . . . and never had any astrological significance. I hope this is helpful although in truth what this woman is claiming is so wacky that it is hardly worth answering.(5) So when this woman says that the Christian fish was a symbol of the 'coming age of Pisces', she is saying something that no one would have thought of in antiquity because in which constellation of the fixed stars the vernal equinox was located, was of no significance and is entirely an idea of modern, I believe twentieth-century, astrology.(6)

In other words, the ancient "Christ conspirators" could not have recognized the 12 celestial sections in order to incorporate them into a Christian myth and announce the ushering in of the Age of Pisces as Murdock claims, because the division into the celestial sections did not occur until a meeting of the International Astronomical Union in the 20th century!(7) Therefore, her claim is without any merit.

Ms. Murdock also holds that when we see 12 figures in the Bible that these are representative of the 12 zodiacal signs. She writes, "In reality, it is no accident that there are 12 patriarchs, 12 tribes of Israel and 12 disciples, 12 being the number of the astrological signs . . ."(8) If we want to accept her thoughts on this, we also need to accept that Dunkin Donuts is owned by an astrologer since they give a discount when you buy a dozen donuts. Grocery stores are also run by astrologers, since you buy eggs by the dozen. Even our legal system must have been influenced by astrology, since there are 12 jurors. When you want to see astrology in something, you see it, even when it requires that you read in foreign meanings into the texts.

But there are further problems with her thesis. Were the 12 tribes of Israel representative of the 12 signs of the zodiac as she claims?(9) She asserts that Simeon and Levi are Gemini. Judah is Leo. And the list goes on. She also claims that when Jacob set up 12 stones representing the tribes that they were really representing the 12 signs of the zodiac.(10) But this is impossible. Genesis was written approximately 1,000 B.C. and contains the story of the 12 tribes of Israel which would have occurred even earlier.(11) The division into the 12 zodiacal signs did not occur until the Babylonians made the divisions in the fifth century B.C.(12) Therefore, reading astrology into the twelve tribes is anachronistic.

She also claims that "[t]he Hebrews were 'moon-worshippers,' since many of their feasts and holidays revolved around the movements and phases of the moon. Such moon-worship is found repeatedly in the Old Testament (Ps. 8:13 [sic], 104:19; Is. 66:23), and to this day Jews celebrate holidays based on the lunar calendar. At Isaiah 47, these moon-worshippers are equated with astrologers, i.e., ' . . . those who divide the heavens, who gaze at the stars, who at the new moons predict what shall befall you.'"(13)

Were the Hebrews moon-worshippers? This seems unlikely for a couple of reasons: (A) Just because the Jews operated under a lunar calendar, does not mean that they were moon worshippers. (B) When you look at the three biblical references she provides to support her claim that moon worship is found repeatedly in the

Old Testament, it is readily seen that these has been taken out of context.

So we have seen that the three passages Ms. Murdock appeals to in support of her thesis that the Hebrews were involved in moon-worship do not support her view in the least. Rather they have been taken out of context, a practice referred to a "proof-texting." Unfortunately, average readers will not look up her references and see this for themselves.

This is not to say that there was not a single Hebrew who worshipped the moon. But her absurd interpretations indicate that she has not supported her view that the Hebrews as a nation had a practice of moon-worship. This is further confirmed by the fact that the worship of anyone or anything other than God was prohibited. Whenever this practice is mentioned in the Bible, there is correction or strong condemnation.(14) Contrary to Ms. Murdock, the Bible is not friendly towards astrology. There is not a single verse that approves of sun worship, moon worship or astrology.

Ms. Murdock also claims that the Bible is favorable towards divination. She writes, "In the earliest parts of the Bible, divination is praised as a way to commune with God or divine the future (Genesis 30:27). Indeed, the word 'divination' comes from the word 'divine,' which is a demonstration that divination was originally considered godly and not evil."(15) This too is an incorrect understanding of the text. Genesis 30:27 records Laban telling Jacob that he has learned through divination that God has blessed him on Jacob's account. But Laban was known to worship other gods.(16) This verse does not praise divination and God has said elsewhere that divination is evil. For example in Leviticus 19:26, it is written, "Do not practice divination or sorcery." Likewise, in Deuteronomy 18:10-12. Read

Ms. Murdock says a lot more in reference to astrology and the Bible which this short paper cannot address. However, it is hoped that these few samples are adequate to demonstrate that she is terribly inaccurate in her understanding of the practice of astrology among the ancients as well as her ineptness in using the Bible to support her view.

2. Comparative Religion Studies

a. Similarities to Krishna

Ms. Murdock contends that Jesus as crucified savior was merely borrowed from other religions. For her, one of the most striking similarities is found with Krishna, the Hindu god. Indeed, her forthcoming book, "Suns of God: Krishna, Buddha and Christ Unveiled" expounds on this position.(21)

What about Ms. Murdock's claim that Krishna is so similar to Jesus that Christianity must have borrowed from Hinduism? Dr. Edwin Bryant, Professor of Hinduism at Rutgers University is a scholar on Hinduism. As of the writing of this paper, he has just translated the Bhagavata-Purana (life of Krishna) for Peguine World Classics and is currently writing a book to be titled, In Quest of Historical Krishna.

When I informed him that Ms. Murdock wrote an article claiming that Krishna had been crucified, he replied, "That is absolute and complete non-sense. There is absolutely no mention anywhere which alludes to a crucifixion."(22) He also 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. The sages who came there for him could not really see it.(23)

Then I read a statement by Ms. Murdock from her article "Krishna, Crucified?" an excerpt from her forthcoming book, Suns of God: Krishna, Buddha and Christ Unveiled.(24) In it she states, "it appears that Krishna is not

the first Indian god depicted as crucified. Prior to him was another incarnation of Vishnu, the avatar named Wittoba or Vithoba, who has often been identified with Krishna." To this Bryant responded, "She doesn't know what she's talking about! Vithoba was a form of Krishna worshipped in the state of Maharashtra. There are absolutely no Indian gods portrayed as crucified." Then he became indignant and said, "If someone is going to go on the air and make statements about religious tradition, they should at least read a religion 101 course."(25)

Later I emailed him regarding her 24 comparisons of Krishna to Jesus which the reader may find in *The Christ Conspiracy*.(26) He stated that 14 of her 24 comparisons are wrong and a 15th is partially wrong.(27) What about her 9 _ that are correct; especially Krishna's virgin birth, the story of the tyrant who had thousands of infants killed (a parallel to Herod), and Krishna's bodily ascension? Benjamin Walker in his book, *The Hindu World: An Encyclopedic Survey of Hinduism* provides an answer. After tracing similarities related to the birth, childhood, and divinity of Jesus, as well as the late dating of these legendary developments in India, "[t]here can be no doubt that the Hindus borrowed the tales [from Christianity], but not the name."(28) Bryant also comments that these parallels come from the *Bhagavata Purana* and the *Harivamsa*. Bryant believes the former "to be prior to the 7th century AD (although many scholars have hitherto considered it to be 11 century AD)."(29) Yet this is hundreds of years after the Gospel accounts. Of the *Harivamsa*, Bryant is uncertain concerning its date. However, most sources seem to place its composition between the fourth and sixth centuries, again hundreds of years after the Gospel accounts had been in circulation.(30) An earlier date is entertained by David Mason of the University of Wisconsin, who states that there is no consensus on the dating that he is aware of but that it may be as early as the second century.(31) Even if this early date is accurate, it is still after the Gospels, not before as Murdock's thesis requires.

Ms. Murdock further claims that Christianity has failed in India because "the Brahmans have recognized Christianity as a relatively recent imitation of their much older traditions."(32) To this, Dr. Bryant simply commented, "Stupid comment."(33)

Ms. Murdock's claim that Christianity has borrowed substantially from Hinduism is without merit. Her claims are false, unsupported, and exhibit a lack of understanding of the Hindu faith.

b. Similarities to Buddha

In addition to Krishna, Ms. Murdock cites similarities between the Buddha and Jesus as an example of how Christianity has borrowed from Buddhism. As with Krishna, she lists 18 similarities Jesus shares with Buddha in *The Christ Conspiracy*.(34) Regarding these, I emailed Professor Chun-fang Yu, Chair of the Department of Religion at Rutgers. Dr. Yu has specialized in Buddhist studies. I listed the 18 similarities recorded by Ms. Murdock and asked if these were actual traditions of the Buddha. She replied writing, "None of the 18 [are] correct. A few, however, have some semblance of correctness but are badly distorted." She then listed a total of eight that had some similarities and provided details.(35)

Dr. Yu ended by writing, "[The woman you speak of] is totally ignorant of Buddhism. It is very dangerous to spread misinformation like this. You should not honor [Ms. Murdock] by engaging in a discussion. Please ask [her] to take a basic course in world religion or Buddhism before uttering another word about things she does not know."

It is appropriate to mention here that Ms. Murdock claims to have mastered several religions. Her book, *The Christ Conspiracy* claims a mastery of Christianity and her new book, *Suns of God: Krishna, Buddha and Christ Unveiled*, with excerpts found on her web site also indicate that she believes Hinduism and Buddhism to be two other religions which she has mastered in terms of her knowledge of them. However, as we have seen, she is terribly ignorant of the actual traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism. And as we are about to see,

she is likewise mistaken when it comes to her understanding of Christianity.

3. Christianity

We saw in section one (i.e., "Astrology") that Ms. Murdock does not use biblical texts in an accurate manner to support her views. In this section we will notice that she also possesses some peculiar views when it comes to New Testament higher criticism. Can these views be supported?

a. Very Late Datings of the Gospels

Ms. Murdock holds that the Gospels were not penned until after A. D. 150, a view held by no major New Testament scholar, irrespective of their theological perspective. She supports her position by quoting John Remsburg who wrote: "The Four Gospels were unknown to the early Christian Fathers. Justin Martyr, the most eminent of the early Fathers, wrote about the middle of the second century. His writings in proof of the divinity of Christ demanded the use of these Gospels, had they existed in his time. He makes more than 300 quotations from the books of the Old Testament, and nearly one hundred from the Apocryphal books of the New Testament; but none from the four Gospels."(36)

But this is false. In Justin's First Apology [i.e., First Defense], he writes, "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."(37) So Justin calls the Gospels the "memoirs" of the apostles and then quotes from them.(38) In his Dialogue With Trypho, Justin makes mention of the "memoirs" another 13 times.(39) In every instance he either quotes from a Gospel or relates a story from them.

Why is it that Justin does not cite the Gospels when defending the deity of Christ? He is dialoguing with a Jew and wants to use the Old Testament Scriptures to defend his position, since he shares these in common with Trypho. This was also the practice of Paul: "Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures . . ."(40)

She quotes Waite again: "No one of the four gospels is mentioned in any other part of the New Testament. . . ." (42) He goes on to say that there is no other evidence of a Gospel until the latter part of the second century. But this is false as well. Paul appears to quote from Luke's Gospel (1 Tim 5:18; cf. Lk 10:7). The oldest manuscript we have is a fragment from the Gospel of John and dates to around A. D. 125 (labeled p52 and kept at the John Rylands Library in Manchester, England). The early Church father, Ignatius (c. A. D. 110), who either knew the apostles or was close to those who did, seems very familiar with the Gospel of Matthew, because of the numerous parallels and apparent quotations from Matthew. Clement (c. A. D. 95) and Polycarp (c. A. D. 110), who knew the apostles, also make use of Matthew. 2 Clement (c. A. D. 120-140) employs numerous sayings from Matthew, Luke and a few from Mark. All of these early Christian writers were from the latter part of the first century through no later than the middle part of the second century.(43) Therefore, her claim that the Gospels were not composed until the latter part of the second century is without support. And there are no respected New Testament critical scholars who embrace her datings.

Murdock quotes from The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets: "No extant manuscript can be dated earlier than the 4th century A. D."(44) This shows no knowledge of the manuscripts that we have. The p52 papyrus mentioned a moment ago dates to around 125. p75 dates to between 175-225. p46 and p66 are

slightly earlier and both date to around 200. p45, the first of the Chester Beatty Biblical papyri dates to the first half of the third century. p47 dates to the latter part of the third century. p72 dates to the third century.(45) In summary, we have seven manuscripts, which predate the fourth century...

c. Paul's Letters

She believes that all of Paul's letters are forgeries. In support of this position she quotes Joseph Wheless: "The entire 'Pauline group' is the same forged class . . . says E. B. [Encyclopedia Biblica] . . . 'With respect to the canonical Pauline Epistles, . . . there are none of them by Paul; neither fourteen, nor thirteen, nor nine or eight, nor yet even the four so long "universally" regarded as unassailable. They are all, without distinction, pseudographia (false-writings, forgeries). . .'"(48) She also quotes Hayyim ben Yehoshua who writes, "we are left with the conclusion that all the Pauline epistles are pseudepigraphic" and he also refers to Paul as a "semi-mythical" figure.(49) Again, this is a position that no major scholar takes.

Polycarp (c. A. D. 110), who knew the apostles, quotes 1 Corinthians 6:2 and assigns it as the words of Paul (Philippians 11:2). Three of the earliest apostolic fathers, two of whom probably knew the apostles, mention Paul in their writings (Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Ignatius). They mention several things about Paul including his sufferings and martyrdom,(50) his position as an apostle,(51) and that he "accurately and reliably taught the word."(52) Moreover, the apostolic fathers cite several of Paul's letters: Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy. Therefore, there are good reasons to believe that Paul was an historical person who authored several letters, which are contained in the New Testament. No serious scholar takes the position of Ms. Murdock and there are good reasons why.

d. Genre

Appealing to Origen as the "most accomplished biblical scholar of the early church," Ms. Murdock quotes him as saying, "The Scriptures were of little use to those who understood them literally, as they are written."(53) When we look at her endnote referencing Origen, we find that her source is Godfrey Higgins, not a biblical scholar or an historian, but an attorney who is claiming Origen said it. When we then do a search through all of Origen's writings, we find that he never made that statement. (54) Again, this shows that Ms. Murdock is not personally familiar with Origen's works. She never interacts with him directly in *The Christ Conspiracy*. Instead, she only quotes others who end up being wrong.(55)

Footnotes. . .

1. See the review by Robert M. Price, "Aquarian Skeptic" in *Free Inquiry*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Amherst: The Council for Secular Humanism, 2001), pp. 66-67. For Dr. Price's comments, see sections 6, "Poor Scholarship," of this paper.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 66.
3. Acharya S. *The Christ Conspiracy: The Greatest Story Ever Sold* (Kempton: Adventures Unlimited Press, 1999), pp. 151-152.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 79, 146, 164, 224, 360.
5. Personal email correspondence on 9/18/01.
6. Personal email correspondence on 9/19/01.
7. Jay Pasachoff is the Director of Hopkins Observatory, Chair of the Department of Astronomy at Williams College, Encarta expert on astronomy, and a member of the International Astronomical Union. In a 9/25/01 personal email correspondence he wrote, "The exact divisions into 88 constellations covering 100% of the sky was adopted by the International Astronomical Union in 1928 and codified in 1930. But the constellation shapes are irregular, and the 12 zodiacal constellations are not exactly 30 degrees each. The sun actually

travels through parts of 13 constellations each year." For more information pertinent to this topic, the reader is referred to Jay Pasachoff's Field Guide To The Stars And Planets (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999).

8. The Christ Conspiracy, p. 166.

9. Ibid., pp. 141-142.

10. Ibid., p. 142.

11. This dating of Genesis is evangelical. Other datings vary greatly. Do we know with certainty that the Israelites existed during this time? Yes. A memorial stele referred to as "the Israel Stele" has been found in Egypt and dates back to just before 1,200 BC. The inscription on it reads how Merneptah, the last Pharaoh of Dynasty 19 of the New Kingdom Period, had warred against and defeated some peoples. He mentions the Israelites and indicated that they were a large people who were spread out by planning. See Amihai Mazar. Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, 10,000-586 B.C.E. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), p. 234, 354.

12. In a personal email correspondence, astronomer Jay Pasachoff writes, "Many of the constellations were referred to in Homer in the 9th century BC. The Babylonians divided the zodiac into 12 constellations in the 5th c. BC."

13. Ibid., p. 136. The Isaiah reference is Isaiah 47:12-13.

14. See for example, Isaiah 47:13-14 and Ezekiel 8:14-18.

15. The Christ Conspiracy, p. 139.

16. See Genesis 31:30, 34-35.

21. At the time of the writing of this paper, the book is not published. However, excerpts from the book may be found on her web site. See www.truthbeknown.com/kcrucified.htm for her attempt to establish that Krishna was crucified in Hindu legend.

22. In a personal telephone conversation 9/6/01.

23. Ibid.

24. At the time of the writing of this paper (11/01), the book is not published. However, excerpts from the book may be found on her web site. See www.truthbeknown.com/kcrucified.htm for her attempt to establish that Krishna was crucified in Hindu legend. See page 2 of the article.

25. In a personal telephone conversation 9/6/01.

26. The Christ Conspiracy, pp. 116-117.

27. Personal email correspondence on 9/20/01. The email is here cited. It includes Murdock's claim and Bryant's comments: 1) Krishna was born of the Virgin Devaki or "Divine One" on 12/25. "Yes. This is true. She was transmitted through the mind of Vasudeva." 2) His earthly father was a carpenter, who was off in the city paying tax while Krishna was born. "He was a cowherd chief. And he was, indeed, off in the city paying taxes, although this was just after Krishna was born." 3) His birth was signaled by a star in the east and attended by angels and shepherds, at which time he was presented with spices. "Partially. The astrological configurations in general were very auspicious (but no mention of a specific star in the East). There were the Indian equivalent of angels (celestial beings who sing and play instruments). No shepherds -- but cowherds were there. No spices, but the heavenly hosts rained down flowers." 4) The heavenly hosts danced and sang at his birth. "Yes." 5) He was persecuted by a tyrant who ordered the slaughter of thousands of infants. "Yes. This is very similar to Herod. The local king heard a divine voice stating that someone who was to be his death was to take birth from Devaki, Krishna's mother. So he killed all the infants who had been recently born in the entire area." 6) Krishna was anointed on the head with oil by a woman whom he healed. "Not quite. He was offered fragrant ointments by a hunchback woman, after which he healed her." 7) He is depicted as having his foot on the head of a serpent. "He subdued a 1000 headed serpent who has polluted the local river by dancing on its head with his feet." 8) He worked miracles and wonders, raising the dead and healing lepers, the deaf and the blind. "This is phrased in rather New Testament type terms, but Krishna did heal people and certainly performed many miracles." 9) Krishna used parables to teach the people about charity and love, and he lived

poor and he loved the poor. "He didn't live particularly poorly, although his childhood was spent amongst the cowherd community. He certainly taught, although not specifically in parables. Krishna devotion is certainly available to the poor, and there are statements which directly favour them." 10) He castigated the clergy, charging them with ambition and hypocrisy. "Tradition says he fell victim to their vengeance. Well.... he criticized the ritualistic brahmanas who were so absorbed in their rites they did not recognise him." 11) Krishna's "beloved disciple" was Arjuna (John). "Nothing to do with John." 12) He was transfigured in front of his disciples. "No." 13) He gave his disciples the ability to work miracles. "He didn;t have disciples, exacly, but devotees. Some could perform supernormal things." 14) His path was "strewn with branches." "No." 15) In some traditions he died on a tree or was crucified between two thieves. "No." 16) Krishna was killed around the age of 30, and the sun darkened at his death. "I think he was 150. Inauspicious astrological omens erupted at his death." 17) He rose from the dead and ascended to heaven in the sight of all men. "He ascended to his abode in his selfsame body, although men only saw part of his ascent." 18) He was depicted on a cross with nail-holes in his feet, as well as having a heart emblem on his clothing. "No." 19) Krishna is the lion of the tribe of Saki. "Not Saki. Sura, or Yadu, are two of the dynasties with which he is associated." 20) He was called the "Shepherd God" and considered the "Redeemer," "Firstborn," "Sin-Bearer," "Liberator," "Universal Word." "No to the first (but cowherd god, OK), OK to the rest." 21) He was deemed the "Son of God" and "our Lord and Savior," who came to earth to die for man's salvation. "No." 22) He was the second person of the Trinity. "No." 23) His disciples purportedly bestowed upon him the title "Jezeus," or "Jeseus," meaning "pure essence." "No." 24) Krishna is to return to judge the dead, riding on a white horse, and to do battle with the "Prince of Evil," who will desolate the earth. "A future incarnation is Kalki, who will ride a white horse and kill all the demons in the future."

28. Benjamin Walker, *The Hindu World: An Encyclopedic Survey of Hinduism*, Vol. 1 (New York: Praeger, 1983), pp. 240-241.

29. Personal email correspondence on 10/18/01.

30. See as examples, the article on the UCLA web site:

www.sscnet.ucla.edu/southasia/Religions/texts/Puranas.html; the short description of the Harivamsa provided by the San Diego Museum of Art: www.sdmart.org/exhibition-binney-literature.html, and the Encyclopedia Britannica Intermediate: <http://search.ebi.eb.com/ebi/article/0,6101,34678,00.html>.

31. David V. Mason. Personal email correspondence on 11/6/01.

32. *The Christ Conspiracy*, p. 118.

33. Personal email correspondence on 9/20/01. I also asked Dr. Bryant regarding the historical evidence for Krishna as an historical rather than mythical figure. He responded that we know that people were worshipping Krishna as god in the fifth century (maybe sixth century) B. C. However, there is nothing more than that in terms of evidence. Traditional sources place him 3,128 B .C. or about 2,500 years before our oldest historical evidence for him appears. This is quite different than the strong evidence we have for Jesus as an historical person.

34. *The Christ Conspiracy*, pp. 109-110.

35. I have numbered these for the reader's convenience. They correspond with Murdock's list on pages 109-110, although she does not number them. I have listed Murdock's claim followed by Dr. Yu's comments. Occasionally, I have added comments found in brackets. (1) Murdock: "Buddha was born on December 25 of the virgin Maya, and his birth was attended by a 'Star of Announcement,' wise men and angels singing heavenly songs." Yu: "Queen Maya was Buddha's mother but she was declared to be a virgin. Rather, she conceived the Buddha after dreaming a white elephant entering her right side in the dream. Buddha was born on the 8th day of the lunar 4th month." (2) Murdock: "At his birth, he was pronounced ruler of the world and presented with 'costly jewels and precious substances.'" Yu: "At birth he took seven steps and declared that this would be his last birth and he would be the most honored one in the world." (4) Murdock: "Buddha was of royal lineage." Yu: "Buddha was a prince, the son of a king of a small kingdom in northern India or Nepal (his

birthplace, Lumbini, has been claimed by both Nepal and India as being located in their territory." (6) Murdock: "He crushed a serpent's head (as was traditionally said of Jesus) and was tempted by Mara, the 'Evil One,' when fasting." Yu: "Mara tempted him before his enlightenment but was defeated." (10) Murdock: "His followers were obliged to take vows of poverty and to renounce the world." Yu: "His followers were monks who lived in monasteries and observed chastity and non-attachment." (14) Murdock: "Buddha ascended bodily to Nirvana or 'heaven.'" Yu: "When he died, his body was cremated. He was not reborn again but said to be in Nirvana." [This is not even close to bodily resurrection as Murdock would hope.] (15) Murdock: "He was called 'Lord,' 'Master,' the 'Light of the World,' 'God of gods,' 'Father of the World,' 'Almighty and All-knowing Ruler,' 'Redeemer of All,' 'Holy One,' the 'Author of Happiness,' 'Possessor of All,' the 'Omnipotent,' the 'Supreme being,' the 'Eternal One.'" Yu: "He is called Lord and Tathagata ('Thus Come')." (18) Murdock: "Buddha is to return 'in the latter days' to restore order and to judge the dead." Yu: "The Future Buddha called Maitreya ('The Friendly One') will be born as a human in the future just as the Buddha some 2500 years ago and revive the religion and bring peace to the world." As you can readily see, Murdock mixes tradition with that which is not a part of Buddhist tradition. Some similarities are very weak as Dr. Yu points out. Others are quite unimpressive (e. g., 4, 10, that both are called "Lord" in 15).

36. The Christ Conspiracy, p. 25.

37. Justin, First Apology, chapter 66.

38. Murdock and her sources are evidently unaware of this passage in Justin. For in her article "The 'Historical' Jesus", an excerpt from her forthcoming book, *Suns of God: Krishna, Buddha and Christ Unveiled* located at <http://truthbeknown.com/historicaljc.htm>, she notes the existence of the "Memoirs of the apostles" mentioned by Justin, but claims that it "is a single book by that title, not a reference to several 'memoirs' or apostolic gospels" (p. 8).

39. Justin, Dialogue with Trypho, chapters 100-107.

40. Acts 17:1-3.

41. The Christ Conspiracy, p. 25.

42. Ibid., p. 26.

43. These datings are from Clayton N. Jeford, *Reading the Apostolic Fathers: An Introduction* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1996) and Lightfoot, Harmer, Holmes, eds. *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English translations of Their Writings, Second Edition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992).

44. The Christ Conspiracy, p. 26.

45. Bruce Manning Metzger. *The Text of the New Testament: It's Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 36-41.

48. Ibid., p. 33.

49 Ibid., p. 34.

50. Clement of Rome. To the Corinthians 5; Polycarp. To the Philippians 9:2.

51. Clement of Rome. To the Corinthians 5; Ignatius. To the Romans 4:3. Polycarp may also be referring to the apostolic status in his letter To the Philippians 12:1. In this verse, he quotes from Ephesians two times and refers to it as "Sacred Scripture." If indeed Paul wrote Ephesians, Polycarp is placing his authority on the highest level.

52. Polycarp. To the Philippians 3:2.

53. The Christ Conspiracy, p. 132.

54. Origen. De Principiis Book 1, Chapter 1, Section 19.

55. Another example embarrassing for Murdock is on pp. 70-71 where she quotes T. W. Doane's citing of Origen on Celsus who "jeers at the fact that ignorant men were allowed to preach, and says that 'weavers, tailors, fullers, and the most illiterate and rustic fellows,' were set up to teach strange paradoxes. 'They openly declared that none but the ignorant (were) fit disciples for the God they worshiped,' and that one of their rules was, 'let no man that is learned come among us.'" The references are from Origen's *Contra Celsus*, Book 3.

The first reference to "weavers, tailors . . ." is from chapter 56 and the latter from chapter 44. In chapter 56, Origen answers Celsus' claims by asking him to provide examples that this is the case and adds, "But he will not be able to make good any such charge against us." In chapter 44, Origen answers Celsus, "although some of them [i.e., Christians] are simple and ignorant, they do not speak so shamelessly as he alleges." Again, if Ms. Murdock had checked her source, she would have found that he was gravely mistaken just as Celsus was.

<http://www.answeringinfidels.com/answering-skeptics/answering-acharya-s/a-refutation-of-acharya-ss-book-the-christ-conspiracy-pt-1.html>

<http://tektonics.org/copycat/osy.html>

Comparing Osiris, Horus, and Jesus

James Patrick Holding

....So let's get to some of these pagan copycat claims. These are from Achy's *Christ Conspiracy* [114-116]; oddly enough Freke and Gandy add nothing new and in fact only supplement a few of these.

For convenience I begin by reproducing the "thumbnail sketch of Horus' life" given in *Encyclopedia of Religions* as offered by Miller, which also lays the groundwork for Osiris:

"In ancient Egypt there were originally several gods known by the name Horus, but the best known and most important from the beginning of the historic period was the son of Osiris and Isis who was identified with the king of Egypt. According to myth, Osiris, who assumed the rulership of the earth shortly after its creation, was slain by his jealous brother, Seth. The sister- wife of Osiris, Isis, who collected the pieces of her dismembered husband and revived him, also conceived his son and avenger, Horus. Horus fought with Seth, and, despite the loss of one eye in the contest, was successful in avenging the death of his father and in becoming his legitimate successor. Osiris then became king of the dead and Horus king of the living, this transfer being renewed at every change of earthly rule." "Horus was usually represented as a falcon, and one view of him was as a great sky god whose outstretched wings filled the heavens; his sound eye was the sun and his injured eye the moon.

Horus

Now we get to the matters of Horus. Many of these have had some input from Miller, so we'll report those and add as needed.

- *Was born of the virgin Isis-Meri in December 25th in a cave/manger with his birth being announced by a star in the East and attended by three wise men.*
- *...Horus was NOT born of a virgin at all. Indeed, one ancient Egyptian relief depicts this conception by showing his mother Isis in a falcon form, hovering over the phallus of a dead and prone Osiris in the Underworld (EOR, s.v. "Phallus"). And the Dec 25 issue is of no relevance to us--**nowhere does the***

NT associate this date with Jesus' birth at all.

Indeed, the description of the conception of Horus will show exactly the sexual elements that characterize pagan 'miracle births', as noted by the scholars earlier:

"But after she [i.e., Isis] had brought it [i.e. Osiris' body] back to Egypt, Seth managed to get hold of Osiris's body again and cut it up into fourteen parts, which she scattered all over Egypt. Then Isis went out to search for Osiris a second time and buried each part where she found it (hence the many tombs of Osiris tht exist in Egypt). The only part that she did not find was the god's penis, for Seth had thrown it into the river, where it had been eaten by a fish; Isis therefore fashioned a substitute penis to put in its place. She had also had sexual intercourse with Osisis after his death, which resulted in the conception and birth of his posthumous son, Harpocrates, Horus-the-child. Osiris became king of the netherworld, and Horus proceeded to fight with Seth..." [CANE:2:1702; emphasis mine]

- *His earthly father was named "Seb" ("Joseph").* Actually Seb was the earth-god, not "earthly," but rather the earth itself (as Nut was the sky), and he was O's dad, not Horus', You can't get from "Seb" to "Joseph" just by putting the names next to each other.
- *He was of royal descent.* Obviously true, and Horus was often identified with the living Pharaoh, but so commonplace as to be meaningless.
- *He had 12 disciples, two of whom were his "witnesses" and were named "Anup" and "AAn" (the two "Johns").* Egyptian religion scholars know of none of this. On this last Miller notes:

...my research in the academic literature does not surface this fact. I can find references to FOUR "disciples"--variously called the semi-divine HERU-SHEMSU ("Followers of Horus") [GOE:1.491]. I can find references to SIXTEEN human followers (GOE:1.196). And I can find reference to an UNNUMBERED group of followers called mesniu/mesnitu ("blacksmiths") who accompanied Horus in some of his battles [GOE:1.475f; although these might be identified with the HERU-SHEMSU in GOE:1.84]. But I cannot find TWELVE anywhere... He performed miracles, exorcized demons and raised El-Azarus ("El-Osiris") from the dead. Miller notes:

Miracle stories abound, even among religious groups that could not possibly have influenced one another, such as Latin American groups (e.g. Aztecs) and Roman MR's, so this 'similarity' carries no force. The reference to this specific resurrection I cannot find ANYWHERE in the scholarly literature. I have looked under all forms of the name to no avail. The fact that something so striking is not even mentioned in modern works of Egyptology indicates its questionable status. It simply cannot be adduced as data without SOME real substantiation. (GOE:1.490).

- *Horus walked on water.* Not that I have found, but he was thrown in the water (see below).
- *His personal epithet was "Iusa" the "ever-becoming son" of "Ptah," the "Father." He was called the "Holy Child."* Miller says: *This fact has likewise escaped me and my research. I have looked at probably 50 epithets of the various Horus deities, and most major indices of the standard Egyptology reference works and come up virtually empty-handed. For more:* See Mark McFall take on "Skeptic X" (skepticism's own Acharya S) on the subject of O's "resurrection" [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#).

Sources:

- Bud.ERR -- Budge, E. Wallis. . 1961.
- Fraz.AAO -- Frazer, J. G. *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*. 1961.

- Griff.OO -- Griffith, J. Gwyn. *The Origins of Osiris and His Cult*. Brill: 1996.
 - Meek.DL -- Meeks, Dimitri. *Daily Life of the Egyptian Gods*. 1996.
 - Short.EG -- Shorter, Alan. *Egyptian Gods: A Handbook*. 1937.
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Zeitgeist Rebuttal

http://www.xanga.com/JB_Fidei_Defensor/638110989/zeitgeist-rebuttal-speech.html Those who are familiar with Zeitgeist know that it's a tripartite conspiracy movie, though my concern is solely with Part One, which attempts to make the case that (i) Jesus never existed, and that (ii) Christian teachings and the vast range of world mythology find a common root in astrology, as evidenced by (iii) strong similarities between the stories of Jesus and various pagan gods. Five especially were singled out for treatment: Attis, Dionysus, Krishna, Mithras, and Horus. Before I get to them, I think it'd be a good idea to review what they said about Jesus himself. Zeitgeist says:

Jesus Christ was born of the virgin Mary on December 25th in Bethlehem, his birth was announced by a star in the east, which three kings or magi followed to locate and adorn the new savior. He was a child teacher at 12, at the age of 30 he was baptized by John the Baptist, and thus began his ministry. Jesus had 12 disciples which he traveled about with performing miracles such as healing the sick, walking on water, raising the dead, he was also known as the "King of Kings," the "Son of God," the "Light of the World," the "Alpha and Omega," the "Lamb of God," and many others. After being betrayed by his disciple Judas and sold for 30 pieces of silver, he was crucified, placed in a tomb and after 3 days was resurrected and ascended into Heaven.

This is mostly true. According to the biblical story, Jesus was born to a virgin mother named Mary in the town of Bethlehem in Judaea. The Bible doesn't directly specify a time of the year, much less a particular month, week, or even day. December 25th was attached to the event much, much later, and it probably isn't a very probable time. His birth was announced by some sort of astronomical object, and a group of magi used it to locate the child. But the Bible doesn't say how many of them there are, only that they brought three gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. It was later tradition that connected each gift to a single figure, and it was also only later that the magi were identified as "kings". At the age of 12, Jesus was found in the Temple having a discussion with the teachers there. The Bible never calls him a "child teacher"; what it actually says is that:

[A]fter three days they found him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. (Luke 2:46-47)

Sometime around the age of 30, Jesus was baptized by a known prophetic figure named John, popularly called "John the Baptist". After this, he gathered a group of disciples and marked out twelve of them as a special group, deliberately echoing the twelve tribes of Israel. Many see a great significance in the symbolism of the number. One brilliant scholar, N. T. Wright, put it very well when he noted that Jesus was representing the end of exile and the beginning of the restoration. He said:

Nobody doubts that Jesus called disciples, and regarded them as a distinct group. This creates a context in which it makes sense, despite some recent doubts, for Jesus to give his followers a special prayer, and to speak of them as a new community, a 'little flock'. He explained what he was doing, as we shall see in more detail later, in terms of the reconstitution of Israel. (Jesus and the Victory of God, p. 169)

The very existence of the twelve speaks, of course, of the reconstitution of Israel; Israel had not had twelve visible tribes since the Assyrian invasion in 734 BC, and for Jesus to give twelve followers a place of prominence, let alone to make comments about them sitting on thrones judging the twelve tribes, indicates pretty clearly that he was thinking in terms of the eschatological restoration of Israel. (Jesus and the Victory of God, p. 300)

This, by the way, is why the movie entirely misses the point when it points out the recurrence of the number 12 in the Bible and tries to link it to the Zodiac. The twelve disciples represent the twelve tribes of Israel, which in turn are descended from the twelve sons of Jacob. (Many of the other instances of "twelve" are simply irrelevant or else might be carefully modeled after the same significance.) With his disciples, Jesus traveled chiefly around Galilee and Judaea, occasionally performing acts that we'd call miracles, such as restoring the ill and marginalized to health and social status, walking on water, and even raising the dead to life. Eventually, one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, betrayed him for 30 pieces of silver (Matthew 26:14-16). Jesus was crucified by the Romans, enduring the most shameful form of execution available in the world of his time. He was then buried in a tomb, but rose again from the dead on the third day in vindication of his mission. Forty days after this, he ascended to 'heaven' (Acts 1:9-11). His followers called him titles like "Son of God" (Mark 1:1), "Lamb of God" (John 1:29), "King of Kings" (Revelation 17:14), "Light of the World" (John 8:12), and "the Alpha and the Omega" (Revelation 1:11).

The movie was at least somewhat accurate on the story of Jesus, but things change just a little bit when we get to those five other gods. Before mentioning them though, one quick note. Zeitgeist often makes a big deal of the fact that these other figures are also credited with miracles, but that shouldn't be too surprising. After all, these are gods we're talking about, and gods and miracles have a tendency to go together. Teaching, too, can sometimes fit into this category. Another function of some gods is to convey information or introduce concepts and practices to humans. It isn't a very good parallel for Zeitgeist to make if the feature is something that tends to be common to gods in general.

That said, I'd like to talk about Attis. Now remember, Zeitgeist said:

Attis, of Phrygia, born of the virgin Nana on December 25th, crucified, placed in a tomb and after 3 days, was resurrected.

That's really not very much to go on, so let me fill in a few gaps. A second-century geographer named Pausanias recorded various traditions about Attis. In one story, he mentions the origins of Attis and the unusual record of his life and death. What Pausanias said about that was this:

Zeus, it is said, let fall in his sleep seed upon the ground, which in course of time sent up a demon with two sexual organs, male and female. They call the demon Agdistis. But the gods, fearing Agdistis, cut off the male organ. There grew up from it an almond tree with its fruit ripe, and a daughter of the river Sangarius, they say, took of the fruit and laid it in her bosom, when it at once disappeared, but she was with child. A boy was born and exposed, but was tended by a he-goat. As he grew up, his beauty was more than human, and Agdistis fell in love with him. When he had grown up, Attis was sent by his relatives to Pessinus, that he might wed the king's daughter. The marriage song was being sung when Agdistis appeared, and Attis went mad and cut off his genitals, as also did he who was giving him his daughter in marriage. But Agdistis repented of what he had done to Attis and persuaded Zeus to grant that the body of Attis should neither rot at all nor decay. (Description of Greece 7.17.10-12)

Before that, though, Pausanias recorded another form of the story in which Attis is slain by a boar:

Hermesianax, the elegiac poet, says in a poem that [Attis] was the son of Galaus the Phrygian, and that he was a eunuch from birth. The account of Hermesianax goes on to say that, on growing up, Attis migrated to Lydia and celebrated for the Lydians the orgies of the Mother; that he rose to such honor that Zeus, being wroth at it, sent a boar to destroy the tillage of the Lydians. Then certain Lydians, with Attis himself, were killed by the boar, and it is consistent with this that the Gauls who inhabit Pessinus abstain from pork. (Description of Greece 7.17.9-10)

Pausanias also mentions elsewhere that Attis was said to have been buried beneath Mount Agdistis (Description of Greece 1.4.5). A third version of the story, also involving a boar, is from the writings of the historian Herodotus (Histories 1.34-45). To just summarize it, Attis is the heroic son of the Lydian king Croesus, who has a dream prophesying that Attis will be killed by an iron spear. The king stores away all the weapons and forbids Attis to go out on military expeditions. In the meantime, a Phrygian named Adrastus, who was exiled from his home for having accidentally killed his brother, comes and begs Croesus to purify him. The king grants his wish and lets him stay there. Shortly thereafter, a massive boar begins terrorizing the Mysian fields, and so the Mysians beg Croesus for help. He agrees to send his armies but not Attis, who then appeals to his father on the basis that boars and iron spears are very different things. Croesus agrees and gives Adrastus the task of protecting Attis. Unfortunately, in an attempt to kill the boar, Adrastus threw his spear and accidentally hit Attis instead, killing him. The Lydians brought back Attis' corpse, which was promptly buried in a tomb, and Adrastus killed himself in remorse.

A fourth tale, told by the Roman poet Ovid (*Fasti* 4.221ff), has Attis as the lover of the goddess Cybele. Attis pledges his undying love but eventually betrays Cybele with the nymph Sagaritis. Cybele responds by wounding a tree with a special connection to him, driving him into a madness that led him to castrate himself. In another book altogether, Ovid relates (*Metamorphoses* 10.103) that Attis died under a pine tree.

Fifth, according to the writer Diodorus Siculus, Cybele caused Attis to die when she had a miscarriage after becoming pregnant by him. She ensured that his body was left exposed rather than buried, and the Phrygians were much later commanded to bury his corpse. Unable to recover any pieces of his body after such a long time, they instead held a funeral for a statue of him.

A sixth tale related by Arnobius (*Adversus Gentes* 5.5-7) in the third century AD is much more detailed than most of the others. In it, Zeus spilled his seed on a rock called Agdus after a failed attempt to impregnate the Mother Goddess, whom Arnobius understands to be Zeus' mother. The rock, however, became pregnant and gave birth to the androgynous Agdistis. He was extremely wild, and so the gods plotted to drug Agdistis with wine until he lost consciousness. During his slumber, the god Liber tied a rope to Agdistis' genitals, and when Agdistis woke up and tried to storm off in a fury, he was emasculated. From the ensuing shower of blood, a pomegranate tree. Later, Nana, the daughter of Sangarius, takes some of the fruit and becomes pregnant through it somehow. She later gives birth to Attis. The Mother Goddess and Agdistis both loved him very greatly, and it wasn't just a "friendly" sort of love, if you catch my drift, especially where Agdistis was concerned. The king of Pessinus intervenes by giving his daughter to Attis in marriage, but Agdistis causes havoc at the wedding, driving everyone insane. Among other tragedies, Attis fatally emasculates himself beneath a pine tree. Zeus is asked to restore Attis to life but refuses, consenting only to make sure that the body never decays, that his hair always grows, and that his little finger is in constant motion.

The movie seemed to imply that the birth of Attis was somehow comparable to that of Jesus, but to review how Attis was born according to the most prominent tradition, it involved vanishing fruit from a tree that grew from the blood shed in self-mutilation by a hermaphrodite demon. Whether or not Attis' mother was a virgin in this story, it isn't said, but in any case, while it does involve a conception without intercourse, beyond that it's certainly nothing like the conception of Jesus, which happens in that story simply through the power of God's Holy Spirit. Besides that, two of the other three traditions advance human fathers, Galaus and Croesus, for Attis, which clearly indicates an absence of belief in any sort of virgin birth. The only tradition that differs is very unlike the story of Jesus and comes from a source later than the New Testament. That makes the so-called "virgin birth" of Attis a very weak link, but not as weak a link as the birthday. Aside from the fact that December 25th isn't associated with Jesus until much later, it isn't associated with Attis at all in the primary sources.

As for crucifixion, it should be very clear that none of these accounts has anything remotely like that. The closest is Attis dying beneath a pine tree, which is an incredible distance from being crucified. One source cited on occasion is a snippet from the fourth-century writings of Firmicus Maternus, a former

astrologer who converted to Christianity and wrote a scathing polemic against the other religions of the empire. He says that during a yearly festival of the cult of Cybele, "a pine tree is cut every year, and an image of a youth is fastened on the middle of the tree" (Error of the Pagan Religions 27.1). This isn't to imply that Attis died on a tree, however; rather, he died under the tree, but for the purposes of the procession, the figure of Attis had to be attached to the tree.

A few stories do have Attis being buried in a tomb after his death, but none of them have him ever leaving it. As for resurrection, the closest that the surviving myths ever get to that is well after the time of Jesus. Aside from what Arnobius related about Attis' non-resurrection, one puzzling passage from Firmicus Maternus affirms new life for Attis. As he says:

In order to satisfy the angry woman, or perhaps trying to find consolation for her after she repented, [the Phrygians] advanced the claim that he whom they had buried a little while earlier had come to life again; and since the woman's heart burned unbearably with overweening love, they erected temples to the dead youth. [...] The earth, they maintain, loves the crops, Attis is the very thing that grows from the crops, and the punishment which he suffered is what a harvester with his sickle does to the ripened crops. His death they interpret as the storing away of the collected seeds, his resurrection as the sprouting of the scattered seeds in the annual turn of the seasons. (Error of the Pagan Religions 3.1-2)

A few things to notice. First of all, this comes from a text several hundred years later than the origin of Christianity, and no hint of a new life for Attis appears in anything earlier than that. Second, in Firmicus' story, the Phrygians fabricate the idea to console Attis' killer; and the claim is immediately contradicted by noting that the Phrygians "erected temples to the dead youth". Third, Firmicus relates that many saw the story as an agricultural allegory, which makes it distinctly unlike Jesus. At best, this is an obscure variant with little to no connection to Christianity.

It looks pretty clear-cut that Attis isn't a "solar messiah" or a "dying-and-rising savior god" like the makers of Zeitgeist would like. He was just a god with a confused family tree who killed himself in a very unpleasant way, and whose male followers often emasculated themselves in imitation of him. Frankly, as a guy, I'm glad that Christianity survived and Attis-worship didn't.

Another of the five main gods offered by Zeitgeist is Dionysus, the Greek god of wine. Talking about him, the movie claims:

Dionysus of Greece, born of a virgin on December 25th, was a traveling teacher who performed miracles such as turning water into wine, he was referred to as the "King of Kings," "God's Only Begotten Son," "The Alpha and Omega," and many others, and upon his death, he was resurrected.

One of our most important sources for information about Dionysus is a play by Euripides called *The Bacchae*. In it, the circumstances of Dionysus' birth are described. Essentially, a Theban woman named Semele, the daughter of Cadmus, was another of Zeus' many mistresses. Hera, perpetually jealous and justifiably so, persuaded Semele to doubt whether Zeus was really himself. Semele requested that Zeus do her a favor, and after securing his promise, she demanded that he appear to her in his divine glory so that she could finally be sure. Of course, when he did so, it burnt her to a crisp. And as Euripides says of Semele:

[I]n the compulsion of birth pains, the thunder of Zeus flying upon her, the mother cast [Dionysus] from her womb, leaving life by the stroke of a thunderbolt. Immediately Zeus, Kronos' son, received him into a chamber fit for birth, and having covered him in his thigh shut him up with golden clasps, hidden from Hera. And he brought forth, when the Fates had perfected him, the bull-horned god, and he crowned him with crowns of snakes. (*Bacchae* 88-102[?])

It seems pretty obvious that this is nothing like a virgin birth. An unusual birth, sure, but Semele definitely wasn't a virgin, and Zeus was about as far from virginity as you can get! In another tradition, Dionysus is the son of Zeus and the goddess Persephone (*Orphic Hymn* 29), but the hymn still mentions that Zeus "mated with Persephone in unspeakable union", so this alternate ancestry doesn't help Zeitgeist's case. As for December 25th, the simple truth is that no ancient pre-Christian source offers a date for a celebration for Dionysus, and the first mention of such a thing is by St. Epiphanius in the fourth century, and the date is January 6th, not December 25th!

Zeitgeist also says that Dionysus was a "traveling teacher", which is true but maybe a bit misleading. In *The Bacchae*, Dionysus disguises himself as a priest of his own worship to go around and spread his cult. That's a long way from Jesus, though, who was a leader-prophet and messianic figure who announced the end of exile, the restoration of the true Israel, the return of God to his people, and the judgment of God against the corruption of the society of his day (*Jesus and the Victory of God*, pp. 168-173, 651-653). Dionysus traveled the world to entice people to worship him and accept his gift of wine, while Jesus traveled the land of Israel to announce the very Jewish message of the kingdom of God. Dionysus also tended to be extremely vindictive to those who refused his message. He often drove women insane and compelled them to commit horrible acts, such as eating their own babies. In *The Bacchae*, Dionysus drives the Theban women insane and tricks King Pentheus into going out among them, where he is torn apart by a group of them, especially his own mother.

It's also said that Dionysus turned water into wine, like Jesus did at the wedding in Cana (*John* 2:1-11), but that doesn't really bear up well under scrutiny. The idea probably comes from two different accounts. In one, Pausanias tells how during festival times at Elis, empty jars are placed in a shrine and, allegedly, are miraculously filled with wine overnight. He says:

Between the market-place and the Menius is an old theater and a shrine of Dionysus. The image is the work of Praxiteles. Of the gods the Eleans worship Dionysus with the greatest reverence, and they assert

that the god attends their festival, the Thyia. The place where they hold the festival they name the Thyia is about eight stades from the city. Three pots are brought into the building by the priests and set down empty in the presence of the citizens and of any strangers who may chance to be in the country. The doors of the building are sealed by the priests themselves and by any others who may be so inclined. On the morrow they are allowed to examine the seals, and on going into the building they find the pots filled with wine. (Description of Greece 6.26.1-2)

The other story, told by Pliny the Elder, makes claims about a spring that occasionally produces wine:

In the island of Andros, at the temple of Father Bacchus, we are assured by Mucianus, who was thrice consul, that there is a spring, which, on the nones of January, always has the flavor of wine; it is called dios theodosia. (Natural History 2.106)

According to Mucianus, there is a fountain at Andros, consecrated to Father Liber, from which wine flows during the seven days appointed for the yearly festival of that god, the taste of which becomes like that of water the moment it is taken out of sight of the temple. (Natural History 31.13)

Diodorus Siculus also mentions "a spring [...] which at some certain times streams forth most rich and fragrant wine". But in all of these cases, it isn't said that Dionysus actually turns water into wine. As miraculous as these stories might be if they were true and not engineered by the priests, they aren't parallel to Jesus' miracle at Cana.

Zeitgeist doesn't directly claim that Dionysus was crucified, but the movie does display in connection with him an amulet portraying a figure suspended from a cross. The only problem with this amulet is that it's suspected by leading experts to be a complete forgery! Dionysus wasn't crucified, and the willingness of the makers of Zeitgeist to include its image without a notice should caution viewers against trusting them too highly. In fairness, though, Zeitgeist's sources Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy are undoubtedly the ones at fault for deliberately ignoring that fact. Even before the forgery was discovered, though, it was known that the amulet dated from times well after the life of Christ, and so the most likely option would have been that the amulet resulted from interaction with Christianity.

As for the death and resurrection of Dionysus, in only two traditions can anything remotely like that be found; the first comes from Diodorus Siculus, who said:

The fabulous writers likewise feign a third generation of Bacchus, that he was the son of Jupiter and Ceres, and that some men of the earth pulled him in pieces, and boiled his parts; and that Ceres gathered his members together again, and renewed and revived him. Which fictions the natural philosophers explain according to natural reason; for he is said (they say) to be the son of Jupiter and Ceres, because

the vine is nourished by the earth and the rain from heaven, and so produces fruit; whence comes wine, by pressing of the grape. That the boiling of his members, signifies the operation of making the wine, which many boil to render it more strong and fragrant. That his members were pulled in pieces by earthly men afterwards, and joined together again, and he restored to his former state, denotes no more, but that, after the vintage and pruning of the vines at the season of the year, the earth causes them to flourish again, and to be as fruitful as they ever were before. (Historical Library, p. 203)

From this it should be clear that the story was essentially an allegory for the process of wine-making and the seasonal growth of grape vines. It has no comparison to the death and resurrection of Jesus, which was held by the early church to be a concrete, historical event that happened at a specific place and time, with no immediate link to yearly cycles or agriculture. A somewhat similar story is also related by the second-century Christian bishop Clement of Alexandria, who wrote:

The mysteries of Dionysus are wholly inhuman; for while still a child, and the Curetes danced around (his cradle) clashing their weapons, and the Titans having come upon them by stealth and having beguiled him with childish toys, these very Titans tore him limb from limb when but a child. [...] Athene, to resume our account, having abstracted the heart of Dionysus, was called Pallas, from the vibrating of the heart; and the Titans who had torn him limb from limb, setting a cauldron on a tripod and throwing into it the members of Dionysus, first boiled them down, and then fixing them on spits, held them over the fire. But Zeus having appeared, since he was a god, having speedily perceived the savour of the pieces of flesh that were being cooked--that savour which your gods agree to have assigned to them as their perquisite--assails the Titans with his thunderbolt and consigns the members of Dionysus to his son Apollo to be interred. And he--for he did not disobey Zeus--bore the dismembered corpse to Parnassus, and there deposited it. (Exhortation to the Heathen 2)

The story is there picked up in a text, possibly from the second century AD, attributed to the earlier Roman writer Gaius Julius Hyginus. It is said:

Liber, son of Jove and Persephone, was dismembered by the Titans, and Jove gave his heart, torn to bits, to Semele in a drink. When she was made pregnant by this, Juno, changing herself to look like Semele's nurse, Beroe, said to her: "Daughter, ask Jove to come to you as he comes to Juno, so you may know what pleasure it is to sleep with a god." At her suggestion Semele made this request of Jove and was smitten by a thunderbolt. He took Liber from her womb and gave him to Nysus to be cared for. For this reason he is called Dionysus, and also "the one with two mothers". (Fabulae 167)

And the third-century Christian author Commodianus summarizes it all quite well:

Ye yourselves say that Father Liber was assuredly twice begotten. First of all he was born in India of Proserpine and Jupiter, and waging war against the Titans, when his blood was shed, he expired even as one of mortal men. Again, restored from his death, in another womb Semele conceived him again of

Jupiter, a second Main, whose womb being divided, he is taken away near to birth from his dead mother, and as a nursling is given to be nourished to Nisus. From this being twice born he is called Dionysus; and his religion is falsely observed in vanity; and they celebrate his orgies such that now they themselves seem to be either foolhardy or burlesquers of Mimnermomerus. They conspire in evil; they practise beforehand with pretended heat, that they may deceive others into saying that a deity is present. Hence you manifestly see men living a life like his, violently excited with the wine which he himself had pressed out; they have given him divine honour in the midst of their drunken excess. (Instructions 12)

That link brings the story full-circle and connects the conflicting mothers assigned to Dionysus. Here, the god Liber--sometimes called Zagreus in his earlier phase--is killed by Titans and essentially reincarnated in the womb of Semele as the more familiar Dionysus. That's certainly not the same thing as resurrection, and in any case, in this story it happens when the figure is only an infant, whereas Jesus is an adult when he is crucified. The second story, on the other hand, is found in Firmicus Maternus, who relates that after the "tyrant" Liber was forced out of Thebes by Lycurgus:

Liber was caught by Lycurgus and hurled into the sea over a nearby cliff which formed an immense precipice with impassible rocks. And this severe punishment was designed to let the mangled corpse, long tossed by the waves of the sea, restore the errant wits of the populace to sanity and sobriety. Such was the end of Liber; and Homer exposes his panicky flight and indicates his death by saying: "Dionysus in terror dived down in the briny sea, where Thetis received him in her bosom; fearstricken he was, for a powerful shivering caught him at the man's bluster." (Error of the Pagan Religions 6.8; cf. Iliad 6.135-137)

In short, the deaths of Dionysus and Jesus are nothing alike, and although Zagreus is restored to life in a sense,

Finally, as for the titles "King of Kings", "God's Only-Begotten Son", and "Alpha and Omega", Zeitgeist is batting zero for three, a rather unimpressive feat. None of them are found in the primary sources, and it's a real shame that the makers of the movie didn't do a better job of documenting their claims.

All in all, Dionysus seems to go the way of Attis. He's no "solar messiah" and bears little resemblance to Jesus. To group them all together is rather unjustified.

A third god suggested by Zeitgeist is Krishna, a manifestation of the Hindu god Vishnu. Zeitgeist says:

Krishna, of India, born of the virgin Devaki with a star in the east signaling his coming, performed miracles with his disciples, and upon his death was resurrected.

The first thing that can be said about this is that, since Krishna was said to be Devaki's eighth son, calling this a virgin birth seems rather dubious. As told in Srimad Bhagavatam, Devaki was the sister of a nobleman named Vasudeva. Devaki's brother Kamsa was a tyrannical king. At the wedding, a disembodied voice informed Kamsa that Devaki's eighth son would kill him, and so Kamsa prepared to kill her. Vasudeva, in a successful effort to save his bride's life, agreed to deliver to Kamsa all of the children immediately after birth. Kamsa succeeded in killing the first six of Devaki's children and put the couple under house arrest. The seventh, a "plenary portion of Krishna" (Srimad Bhagavatam 10.2.4-5) was transferred to another woman's womb through miraculous means. The eighth was Krishna himself, possibly conceived without intercourse. Cryptically, the text says that:

While carrying the form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead within the core of his heart, Vasudeva bore the Lord's transcendently illuminating effulgence, and thus he became as bright as the sun. He was therefore very difficult to see or approach through sensory perception. Indeed, he was unapproachable and unperceivable even for such formidable men as Kamsa, and not only for Kamsa but for all living entities. Thereafter, accompanied by plenary expansions, the fully opulent Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is all-auspicious for the entire universe, was transferred from the mind of Vasudeva to the mind of Devaki. Devaki, having thus been initiated by Vasudeva, became beautiful by carrying Lord Krishna, the original consciousness for everyone, the cause of all causes, within the core of her heart, just as the east becomes beautiful by carrying the rising moon. (Srimad Bhagavatam 10.2.17-18)

Vasudeva escaped temporarily with Krishna, went to another house, exchanged Krishna for a baby girl, and returned to his place of imprisonment. Thus, Krishna escaped being killed. He later did, as the story goes, kill Kamsa (Srimad Bhagavatam 10.44.34-38).

The birth of Krishna is closer by far to the birth of Jesus than those of either Attis or Dionysus, but the fundamental difference is that Zeitgeist is simply dead wrong in calling Devaki a "virgin". Krishna had an unusual birth, perhaps, maybe even a peculiar sexless one, but it isn't a virgin birth. And unlike the birth of Jesus', which reflects a very Jewish background of transcendent monotheism, the birth of Krishna is made possible through a distinctively Hindu pantheistic framework.

The only other important part of Zeitgeist's picture of Krishna is the claim that after he died, he was resurrected. The movie is right to say that Krishna died. He was, after all, an incarnation of the divine, an avatar of Vishnu. The story of his death, in which Krishna is mistakenly killed by a hunter, is narrated in the Mahabharata like this:

Having restrained all his senses, speech, and mind, Krishna laid himself down in high Yoga. A fierce hunter of the name of Jara then came there, desirous of deer. The hunter, mistaking Keshava, who was stretched on the earth in high Yoga, for a deer, pierced him at the heel with a shaft and quickly came to that spot for capturing prey. Coming up, Jara beheld a man dressed in yellow robes, rapt in Yoga and endued with many arms. Regarding himself as an offender and filled with fear, he touched the feet of

Keshava. The high-souled one comforted him and then ascended upwards, filling the entire welkin with splendor. (Mahabharata 16.4)

Absolutely nowhere, though, have I found a tradition of Krishna being resurrected. Reincarnated, perhaps, but that's hardly out of place in Hinduism. Reincarnation isn't comparable to the Jewish concept of resurrection, which involves the same body returning to life, not a new body being conceived in a womb.

All in all, then, Krishna isn't very much like Jesus either. There's no virgin birth, per se; there's no crucifixion; there's no resurrection; and the significance of Krishna's life was totally unlike Jesus'.

The next god tried out by Zeitgeist is Mithras. There are actually three important versions of Mithras: the Vedic god Mitra, the Iranian god Mithra, and the Mithras of the Roman Mithraic cult. One mistake that Zeitgeist makes here and there is assuming that these are all pretty much the same. That was the dominant view in scholarship a long time ago, when Franz Cumont was a leading expert on Mithraism, but modern Mithraic scholars know that the three shouldn't be confused. Anyway, Zeitgeist largely draws on Roman Mithraism when it says:

Mithra, of Persia, born of a virgin on December 25th, he had 12 disciples and performed miracles, and upon his death was buried for 3 days and thus resurrected, he was also referred to as "The Truth," "The Light," and many others. Interestingly, the sacred day of worship of Mithra was Sunday.

The first significant claim, of course, is the virgin birth. Unfortunately, since Roman Mithraism was a mystery religion, they tended not to write down what they believed. However, a number of pieces of artwork survive, and so scholars can reconstruct various elements of the story of Mithras. The Roman Mithras was born, somewhat like Agdistis, from a rock, and in adult form at that. Commodianus confirms this, saying that "the unconquered one was born from a rock" (Instructions 13). In the Zoroastrian Yashts of the Avesta (esp. cf. Mihr Yasht), Mithra is created by Ahura Mazda as one of the yazatas (Yasht 10.1). Calling the birth of Mithras a "virgin birth" is a gross misrepresentation.

The claim that Mithras had twelve disciples is pretty common among Zeitgeist's sources, and it's based on a misinterpretation of a particular relief that displays signs of the Zodiac. It'd be a mistake to define these figures, then, as "disciples" of Mithras.

The real problem with what Zeitgeist says about Mithras comes with talk of a death, burial, and resurrection. Nowhere is there even the slightest bit of evidence that Mithras was imagined by either Romans or Persians to have ever died. The leading scholars insist on this point. And, of course, without

a death, burial and resurrection tend to go out the window. The closest that they ever come to making a point on this issue is through a brief quote from a second-century Christian named Tertullian, who said:

The question will arise: by whom is to be interpreted the sense of the passages which make for heresies? By the devil, of course, to whom pertain those wiles which pervert the truth, and who, by the mystic rites of the idols, vies even with the essential portions of the sacraments of God. He, too, baptizes some--that is, his own believers and faithful followers; he promises the putting away of sins by a laver (of his own); and if my memory still serves me, Mithra there, (in the kingdom of Satan,) sets his marks on the foreheads of his soldiers; celebrates also the oblation of bread; and introduces an image of a resurrection, and before a sword wreathes a crown. (Prescriptions Against Heretics 40.1-4)

The first thing worthy of being noticed is that Tertullian admits he's relying on doubtful memories for his claims about Mithraism. Second, several of these may be things that Tertullian has phrased to parallel Christian thought in order to make his point: that Satan perverts everything good in Christianity. Third, Tertullian says that Mithras "introduces an image of a resurrection". Exactly what that's supposed to mean, is nowhere made clear. It definitely isn't close to sure what the image is, or that the resurrection is supposed to be that of Mithras. It's a vast stretch to get from passages like this to a belief in a dying and rising Mithras. It just isn't supported by the evidence.

The same problem goes along with the claim that Mithras had titles like "the Truth" and "the Light". If he did, Mithraic scholars would probably appreciate it if the makers of Zeitgeist could let them know where, since it'd be a major find. There's just no evidence for those titles.

Zeitgeist is somewhat correct that Sunday was a sacred day for Roman Mithraism, but it isn't nearly so significant as they might think. The reason that Christian worship came to take place on a Sunday was in commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus; Mithras doesn't have anything like that. Instead, it should just be considered that there are only seven days in a week, and it shouldn't be terribly surprising if sacred days happen to coincide. Besides that, the vast bulk of our evidence for Roman Mithraism comes from after the time of Jesus, meaning that it's more probably that, if there were any borrowing involved here, it was the Mithraists borrowing from the Christians in this case. Interestingly, historian Michele Salzman has argued that the Mithraic connection to Sunday postdates the New Testament era:

The evidence that can be adduced for the Mithraists' use of the seven-day planetary week is largely iconographic; we simply do not know how much it shaped their liturgy in the centuries before Constantine. [...] [T]here is no good evidence to indicate that pagans celebrated the dies Solis [Sunday] as a religious holiday. [...] [P]agans and Christians did have different notions of Sunday; only for the Christians do we have evidence of this day being marked as a day of worship on a weekly basis, both before and after Constantine. (Time and Temporality in the Ancient World, pp. 192, 195, 207)

So far, Zeitgeist seems to be zero for four. But what about the fifth god, the one they seem to believe is the strongest connection? That'd be Horus. The movie says a lot more about him:

[Horus] is the Sun God of Egypt of around 3000 BC. He is the sun, anthropomorphized, and his life is a series of allegorical myths involving the sun's movement in the sky. From the ancient hieroglyphics in Egypt, we know much about this solar messiah. For instance, Horus, being the sun, or the light, had an enemy named Set and Set was the personification of darkness or night. And, metaphorically speaking, every morning Horus would win the battle against Set - while in the evening, Set would conquer Horus and send him into the underworld. [...] Broadly speaking, the story of Horus is as follows: Horus was born on December 25th of the virgin Isis-Meri. His birth was accompanied by a star in the east, which in turn, three kings followed to locate and adorn [sic] the newborn savior. At the age of 12, he was a prodigal child teacher, and at the age of 30, he was baptized by a figure named Anup and thus began his ministry. Horus had 12 disciples he traveled around with, performing miracles by healing the sick and walking on water. Horus was known by many gestural names such as "the Truth", "the Light", "God's Anointed Son", "the Good Shepherd", "the Lamb of God", and many others. After being betrayed by Typhon, Horus was crucified, buried for three days, and thus resurrected.

There's an immense amount to say about all of these claims. First of all, Zeitgeist presents an immensely simplistic version of the relationship between Horus and Set, identifying the former with the sun and the latter with darkness. In fact, in the Egyptian sources we do have, one of Set's main functions was to defend the sun on its travels against Apophis, the dragon who wished to destroy it (ANET, p. 12). However, in one very important myth cycle, he does frequently serve also as the bitter foe of first his brother Osiris, whom he kills, and later Osiris' son Horus, against whom he competes for power before the gods finally convene and decide in favor of Horus. Yet in the same text, the Egyptian sun god Re declares:

Let Seth, the son of Nut, be given to me, so that he may live with me and be a son to me. And he shall speak out in the sky, and men shall be afraid of him. (ANET, p. 17)

In the stories of Horus, again Zeitgeist goes too far in their desperate desire to see December 25th everywhere. The sole reference to a birthdate is to the 31st of an Egyptian month Khoiak, which probably coincided more with October than with December. The odds that Khoiak 31st corresponds to December 25th are certainly small. His mother Isis was also not a virgin when he was born. There is certainly no reason to suspect that Horus was conceived in a manner other than intercourse between Osiris and Isis. In Plutarch's *Osiris and Isis*, Harpocrates--Horus-the-Child--has the following origin:

Isis conceived by Osiris copulating with her after death and brought forth the prematurely born, and weak in his lower limbs, Harpocrates. (Osiris and Isis 19)

And in the first hymn found in the Egyptian Book of the Dead, the last line is:

The Company of the gods rejoiced at the coming of Horus, the son of Osiris, whose heart was firm, the triumphant, the son of Isis, the heir of Osiris.

It must be said, of course, that Egyptian mythology tended to have several figures identified as Horus. First, one of the siblings of Osiris and Isis was called "the elder Horus", and Plutarch records a suggestion that he was born when Osiris and Isis, still both in the same womb--they were, after all, brother and sister--had intercourse (Osiris and Isis 12). A Horus seemingly distinct from both of these, in Plutarch's account, is the Horus who fights Set, called Typhon by Plutarch.

As for the three kings adoring Horus in infancy, the teaching at age 12, the baptism by Anup at age 30, the twelve disciples, the crucifixion, the burial, and the resurrection: all foreign to our ancient sources for Horus. Ancient mythology tends not to have events happening at specific times in the lives of gods, though various phases like infancy and adulthood aren't uncommon. Anup appears to be an alternate name for Anubis, the jackal-headed god of embalming, who wasn't in the baptism business. That was a Jewish thing, which is why John the Baptist was known to do it (Antiquities of the Jews 18.5.2). When sources record associates of Horus, the number 12 isn't among them. When it comes to Horus being "betrayed by Typhon", we have to recall that Typhon was the Greek name for Set, who was the foe of Horus, not his follower. The idea of "betrayal", insofar as it's intended to parallel the betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot, is out of place here. Most importantly, Horus was never crucified--never killed, for that matter--and hence had no resurrection scene either. As far as a parallel to Jesus goes, Horus is as much of a bust as the others.

Now, before I move on from Egypt, there's just one last thing I want to mention. You might remember that in the movie, a very, very long list of claimed similarities between Christianity and Egyptian myth scrolled quickly across the screen. Well, I was curious, so I transcribed the first part of the table. To sum up, if these parallels were any more strained, they'd need to be hospitalized. Many are completely irrelevant, and some are outright laughable. One of them, for example, said:

Seb, Isis and Horus, the Kamite holy trinity [compares to] Joseph, Mary and Jesus, a Christian holy trinity.

The makers of the list clearly weren't thinking. Nowhere in Christianity are Joseph, Mary, and Jesus said to comprise a "holy trinity". The word "trinity" isn't a synonym for "trio" or "triad"; the only trinity in Christianity is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Joseph, Mary, and Jesus are sometimes called "the Holy Family", but never "a Christian holy trinity". Whoever wrote this list simply didn't understand the word, and they were clearly very desperate to find as many parallels as possible, no matter the cost to facts. Case in point, a second line said:

Horus, the brother of Set the betrayer [compares to] Jesus, the brother of Judas the betrayer.

The problem is that nothing in the historically reliable documents and traditions at our disposal intimates that Jesus was the brother of Judas Iscariot! If these are the sorts of stretches necessary to give the illusion of an impressive collection of parallels, it isn't worth it. As a last item from the list, another line said:

The two mothers of Child-Horus, Isis and Nephthys, who were two sisters [compare to] the two mothers of Child-Jesus, who were sisters.

...I'll let that just sink in a moment. Whatever the merits of the first half, the second part is just incredible. Jesus did not have two mothers who were sisters. Jesus had one mother, Mary! By the way, a quick excursus: elsewhere in the film, they claim that three "virgin mothers"--Mary the mother of Jesus, Myrrha the mother of Adonis, and Maya the mother of Buddha--all had names beginning with the letter M, as though this were somehow significant. In fact, though, it's known that "Mary" was the most common name among Jewish women in the land of Israel at that time (Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, p.89). It should hardly come as a surprise that the mother of Jesus might bear that name. The movie is right that the mothers of Adonis and Buddha are called Myrrha and Maya in some traditions, but neither was a virgin mother. Myrrha committed incest with her father, Cinryas according to Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 10.298-518). Apollodorus gives the mother the name Smyrna, essentially equivalent to Myrrha, and calls her father Theias (*Library* 3.14.4). In this version, too, Adonis is born from incest. As for Maya, it's true that in many traditions, Buddha was conceived apart from sexual union, but as Maya was already married, it's doubtful that she herself was a virgin. What the Buddha-karita of Asvaghosha, a first-century biographer of Buddha, says is:

A king, by name Suddhodana, of the kindred of the sun, anointed to stand at the head of earth's monarchs, ruling over the city, adorned it, as a bee-in-mate a full-blown lotus. [...] To him there was a queen named Mâyâ, as if free from all deceit--an effulgence from his effulgence, like the splendour of the sun when it is free from all the influence of darkness, a chief queen in the united assembly of all queens. [...] Then falling from the host of beings in the Tushita heaven, and illumining the three worlds, the most excellent of bodhisattvas suddenly entered at a thought into her womb, like the Nâga-king entering the cave of Nandâ. Assuming the form of a huge elephant white like Himâlaya, armed with six tusks, with his face perfumed with flowing ichor, he entered the womb of the queen of king Suddhodana to destroy the evils of the world. (Buddha-karita 1.9, 15, 19-20)

Those who try to argue for Maya's virginity commonly toss out one source, a quotation from the fourth-century Christian author Jerome, who writes:

To come to the Gymnosophists of India, the opinion is authoritatively handed down that Buddha, the founder of their religion, had his birth through the side of a virgin. (*Against Jovinianus* 1.42)

The problem with using this as evidence is that Jerome wrote many hundreds of years after the lifetime of the historical Buddha; he was not a Buddhist, but rather a Christian looking at Buddhism through Christian eyes; and he lived a great distance from India. The quote appears in a context where Jerome is defending the virtues of chastity, and in the same list--which he says was "hastily gathered from many histories" (Against Jovinianus 1.43)--he mentions Minerva's birth from Jupiter's head, Bacchus' birth from Zeus' thigh, the allegedly "virgin" birth of Plato's mother after being "violated by an apparition of Apollo" (1.42), and the "virgin" birth of Romulus and Remus, the sons of the Roman god Mars. The odds simply favor the position that Jerome is unreliable and, at best, reporting a Christianized tradition. Buddha most likely was not initially claimed to have had a virgin birth.

Zeitgeist included one other important list, though, a list of other pagan gods said to share the characteristics of Jesus, Attis, Dionysus, Krishna, Mithras, and Horus. Well, we've already seen how poorly the movie did on those comparisons, which it considered the cream of the crop. This list is even worse in many cases. One of the "gods" on the list, "Beddru of Japan", is entirely fictional! The name is entirely wrong for the supposed country of origin, and in fact the first mention of such a god is in the source from which the list was taken uncritically, the first chapter of a book written in 1875 by Kersey Graves called *The World's Sixteen Crucified Saviors*. Graves is widely recognized as unreliable in the extreme, even for his own time. The only thing Zeitgeist omitted from his list was the last one, Muhammad. Interestingly, the list shows up again as a faint background behind a set of pictures, and careful examination reveals that in this scene, Muhammad's name concludes the list. Also, the list by Graves records "Adonis, son of the virgin Io of Greece", which entirely contradicts the movie's statement that the mother of Adonis was Myrrha! That kind of discrepancy deserves to be noted.

Still trying to defend the link, though, Zeitgeist cites an infamous and often misunderstood passage from Justin Martyr. The movie says:

Justin Martyr, one of the first Christian historians and defenders, wrote: "When we say that he, Jesus Christ, our teacher, was produced without sexual union, was crucified and died, and rose again, and ascended into Heaven, we propound nothing different from what you believe regarding those who you esteem Sons of Jupiter." In a different writing, Justin Martyr said "He was born of a virgin, accept this in common with what you believe of Perseus." It's obvious that Justin and other early Christians knew how similar Christianity was to the Pagan religions. However, Justin had a solution. As far as he was concerned, the Devil did it. The Devil had the foresight to come before Christ, and create these characteristics in the Pagan world

A couple things need to be said. What Justin is doing here is countering arguments that Christian doctrine is absurd by claiming that it resembles things already believed by non-Christians. Of course, to do so, Justin has to make some vast stretches in order to make things fit. What we have to keep in mind is his setting. In the ancient world, "new" wasn't "improved", "new" was pretentious. What's more, Christianity had the disadvantage of a Jewish background, which surely didn't help, as well as the ultimate turn-off: worship of a crucified man. Appealing to similarity in that context, while obviously going too far, was an understandable tactic. Justin isn't trying to explain away parallels that everyone recognizes; he's trying to convince the pagans that the parallels exist, and also that Satan developed

these similarities through misunderstanding prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament. When Justin really gets into the details in the passages that the movie doesn't quote, he compares Greek myth with the writings of Old Testament prophets like Isaiah and Zechariah. Justin Martyr believed that the Greeks plagiarized ideas from the ancient Israelites, strange as that sounds. His ultimate point is that if the pagans believe these sorts of things about their gods, they have no good reason to reject the story of Jesus. Probably the best summary of his line of argument comes from the chapter before he begins talking about these "similarities":

If, therefore, on some points we teach the same things as the poets and philosophers whom you honour, and on other points are fuller and more divine in our teaching, and if we alone afford proof of what we assert, why are we unjustly hated more than all others? (1 Apology 20)

So it should be taken with a grain of salt when Zeitgeist says that Justin Martyr proves their point. He had an agenda, and in many ways his case is precisely the opposite of theirs.

Moving on, Zeitgeist made quite a number of claims about the "real" significance of the birth narratives in the Gospels. To select just a few highlights:

First of all, the birth sequence is completely astrological. The star in the east is Sirius, the brightest star in the night sky, which, on December 24th, aligns with the 3 brightest stars in Orion's Belt. These 3 bright stars are called today what they were called in ancient times: The Three Kings. [...] Virgo is also referred to as the House of Bread, and the representation of Virgo is a virgin holding a sheaf of wheat. [...] Bethlehem is thus a reference to the constellation Virgo, a place in the sky, not on Earth. [...] By December 22nd, the Sun's demise was fully realized, for the Sun, having moved south continually for 6 months, makes it to its lowest point in the sky. [...] During this 3 day pause, the Sun resides in the vicinity of the Southern Cross, or Crux, constellation. And after this time on December 25th, the Sun moves 1 degree, this time north[.] And thus it was said: the Sun died on the cross, was dead for 3 days, only to be resurrected or born again.

It's difficult to know precisely where to begin with this. First of all, I already mentioned that the "three kings" and December 25th result from later traditions, not from the original story of Jesus. None of what the movie has to say about that is relevant. While Zeitgeist is correct that the stars of Orion's Belt have been called the "Three Kings", this seems to be a modern term, not an ancient one; and there isn't any evidence that Virgo was called the "House of Bread". Bethlehem does mean "House of Bread", but it's a known city on earth, the hometown of King David (1 Samuel 17:12), and long before the time of Jesus, the prophet Micah wrote:

Now gather yourself in troops, O daughter of troops. He has laid siege against us; they will strike the judge of Israel with a rod on the cheek. But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to me the one to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth

are from of old, from everlasting. Therefore he shall give them up, until the time that she who is in labor has given birth; then the remnant of his brethren shall return to the children of Israel. And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of YHWH, in the majesty of the name of YHWH his God; and they shall abide, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. (Micah 5:1-4)

There's one more truly glaring problem with the claims made by Zeitgeist here. Curious about the astronomy, a skeptic of the claims contacted Dr. Noel Swerdlow, a noted astronomy professor at the University of Chicago. As it turns out, while the stars of the Southern Cross were just barely visible from Israel in ancient times, it wasn't distinguished as a constellation until much later. In fact, in ancient times, the second-century astronomer Ptolemy, who catalogued a number of stars in various constellations in a work called the *Almagest*, included these stars in the constellation Centaurus (*Almagest* VIII.1.H161-2)! The simple truth is that it wasn't for over a thousand years after the time of Jesus that the Southern Cross was distinguished. Zeitgeist is being heavily anachronistic; what we know as the "Southern Cross" just couldn't have had that kind of significance back then. After this, the movie continued to say things like:

Now, of the many astrological-astronomical metaphors in the Bible, one of the most important has to do with the ages. Throughout the scripture there are numerous references to the "Age." In order to understand this, we need to be familiar with the phenomenon known as the precession of the equinoxes. The ancient Egyptians along with cultures long before them recognized that approximately every 2150 years the sunrise on the morning of the spring equinox would occur at a different sign of the Zodiac. [...] [Ancient societies] referred to each 2150 year period as an "age." From 4300 b.c. to 2150 b.c., it was the Age of Taurus, the Bull. From 2150 b.c. to 1 a.d., it was the Age of Aries, the Ram, and from 1 a.d. to 2150 a.d. it is the Age of Pisces, the age we are still in to this day, and in and around 2150, we will enter the new age: the Age of Aquarius.

To stop for a moment right there, one thing desperately needs to be said. Zeitgeist's sources refuse to admit it, but the precession of the equinoxes was only discovered in the second century BC by a Greek named Hipparchus (*The Origins of the Mithraic Mysteries*, p. 76). "Ancient societies" before this weren't aware of it. That becomes very important shortly. Continuing, the movie talks about the time during the forty years when the Israelites lived as nomads in the desert and Moses, coming down from Mt. Sinai, discovered the Israelites making a golden calf idol:

Most Biblical scholars would attribute [Moses'] anger to the fact that the Israelites were worshiping a false idol, or something to that effect. The reality is that the golden bull is Taurus the Bull, and Moses represents the new Age of Aries the Ram. This is why Jews even today still blow the Ram's horn. Moses represents the new Age of Aries, and upon the new age, everyone must shed the old age.

Of course, in light of the fact that the ancient Israelites didn't know about the precession of the equinoxes, the connection here falls even flatter than it would've otherwise. The more sensible view prevails: Moses' anger has nothing to do with astrological symbolism, but instead is based on the fact that the Israelites were already committing idolatry. It wasn't uncommon in that general area for gods to be represented by

bulls, like the Canaanite high god El was (ANET, p. 129). As for the ram's horn, the shofar, do we really need to astrology to understand the common-sense selection of an animal whose horns make fine trumpets? Moving on, Zeitgeist gets to the New Testament and says:

Jesus is the figure who ushers in the age following Aries, the Age of Pisces the Two Fish. [...] Jesus feeds 5000 people with bread and "two fish." When he begins his ministry walking along Galilee, he befriends two fisherman, who follow him. And I think we've all seen the Jesus-fish on the backs of people's cars. [...] At Luke 22:10 [...] the man bearing a pitcher of water is Aquarius, the water-bearer, who is always pictured as a man pouring out a pitcher of water. [...] He represents the age after Pisces, and when the Sun (God's Sun) leaves the Age of Pisces (Jesus), it will go into the House of Aquarius, as Aquarius follows Pisces in the precession of the equinoxes. [...] Apart from the cartoonish depictions in the Book of Revelation, the main source of this idea [of the end of the world] comes from Matthew 28:20, where Jesus says "I will be with you even to the end of the world." However, in King James Version, "world" is a mistranslation, among many mistranslations. The actual word being used is "aeon", which means "age."

In all of this, Zeitgeist actually does get something monumentally right. When Jesus refers to the "end of the aeon", he doesn't mean the end of the world. But he also isn't talking about the astrological Age of Pisces, either. Rather, in first-century Jewish thought there was an awareness of the current age, *ha-olam ha-zeh*, and the "age to come", *ha-olam ha-ba*. The distinction shows up in later rabbinic writings, and it's also what Jesus is talking about. The age of exile is drawing to a close, and the messianic age is dawning. It has nothing to do with astrology. One more quick side note: the makers of Zeitgeist betray only their own ignorance when they talk about the "cartoonish depictions in the Book of Revelation". The tradition of apocalyptic literature deserves to be met on its own terms, although admittedly many modern Christians project their own ideas onto it just as rapidly.

The movie also makes a big deal about fish in Christianity. It really isn't too surprising, though, when you consider just how much of the action in the Synoptic Gospels--that is, Matthew, Mark, and Luke--takes place around the Lake of Gennesaret, also called the Sea of Galilee, where fishing was very important and fish were an important food. Jesus doesn't just call two fishermen, he calls several pairs of fishermen: Simon Peter and his brother Andrew, and James and John the sons of Zebedee, were all fishermen. Jesus feeds the 5000 with five loaves of bread and two fish because, in the account, that's what was presented to him. And you'll note that those numbers didn't stay so low for long! Pisces has nothing to do with it. Nor does it have anything to do with the ancient Christian symbol of the fish, which probably had its origins in the prevalence of fishing in the Galilean ministry of Jesus and in the fact the Greek word for fish, *ichthys*, made an excellent acronym for the phrase *Iesous Christos, Theou 'Uios, Soter*--"Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior".

Finally, the case of Luke 22:10 and its man carrying a pitcher of water. The fuller passage reads:

Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed. And [Jesus] sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat." So they said to him, "Where do you want us to prepare?" And he said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house which he enters. Then you shall say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, 'Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' ' Then he will show you a large, furnished upper room; there make ready." So they went and found it just as he had said to them, and they prepared the Passover. (Luke 22:7-13)

In context, it's obvious that Zeitgeist is reading a lot into the passage that just isn't there and cutting away everything that doesn't fit. What Luke wrote was about an actual, physical male carrying a pitcher of water, who was going to lead Peter and John to the right place.

This brings us to a point where we can pursue another of Zeitgeist's big claims. According to them, Jesus never even existed! What they say is:

Furthermore, is there any non-Biblical historical evidence of any person, living with the name Jesus, the Son of Mary, who traveled about with 12 followers, healing people and the like? There are numerous historians who lived in and around the Mediterranean either during or soon after the assumed life of Jesus. How many of these historians document this figure? Not one. [...] Four historians are typically referenced to justify Jesus's existence. Pliny the Younger, Suetonius, and Tacitus are the first three. Each one of their entries consists of only a few sentences at best and only refer to the Christus or the Christ, which in fact is not name but a title. It means the "Anointed one". The fourth source is Josephus and this source has been proven to be a forgery for hundreds of years. Sadly, it is still cited as truth.

Now, a very great deal of this is highly inaccurate. First of all, a quick question: why do we need "non-Biblical historical evidence" for Jesus? The New Testament is a set of primary source documents just as valid as any other, not less so. The books we now call Gospels were shown by a scholar named Richard Burridge to be in the genre of Greco-Roman biographies, and there's just no reason to consider them fundamentally fictional. We're free to disbelieve them, if we like, but they are what they are. So that right there produces several important early sources to the existence of a historical Jesus. Count the Synoptic Gospels as one or three, the Gospel of John as another--and I highly recommend Richard Bauckham's book *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple* for information about that--and the letters of Paul as yet another.

Let's start with Flavius Josephus, their fourth historian. His most famous statement is sometimes called the *Testimonium Flavianum*, and it reads:

Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of

the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day. (Antiquities of the Jews 18.3.3)

The movie claims that this passage is entirely a forgery, but that's just not true. It almost certainly does contain some interpolations, some edits by later copyists who added a few things to what Josephus had to say, but the majority view among scholars who devote themselves seriously to the study of Josephus' works is that the passage, minus a few interpolations, is authentic. Louis Feldman, for example, one of the world's leading Josephan scholars, did an extensive survey of the literature and found that the majority voice was for only partial interpolation, with many scholars even going for full authenticity. And as Feldman says:

We must start with the assumption that the 'Testimonium' is authentic until proven otherwise, inasmuch as the manuscript tradition, late though it be, is unanimous in including it. (Josephus and Modern Scholarship, 1937-1980, p. 690)

Furthermore, this isn't the only reference to Jesus in the works of Josephus. There's another passage that Zeitgeist totally ignored:

And now Caesar, upon hearing the death of Festus, sent Albinus into Judea as procurator. But the king deprived Joseph of the high priesthood, and bestowed the succession to that dignity on the son of Ananus, who was also himself called Ananus. Now the report goes that this eldest Ananus proved a most fortunate man; for he had five sons who had all performed the office of a high priest to God, and who had himself enjoyed that dignity a long time formerly, which had never happened to any other of our high priests. But this younger Ananus, who, as we have told you already, took the high priesthood, was a bold man in his temper, and very insolent; he was also of the sect of the Sadducees, who are very rigid in judging offenders, above all the rest of the Jews, as we have already observed; when, therefore, Ananus was of this disposition, he thought he had now a proper opportunity [to exercise his authority]. Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the sanhedrim of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned: but as for those who seemed the most equitable of the citizens, and such as were the most uneasy at the breach of the laws, they disliked what was done. (Antiquities of the Jews 20.9.1)

The important part of this passage for us is that it refers to James, the brother of Jesus (Matthew 13:55). We know that we have the right Jesus because Josephus makes sure to specify that he's the Jesus who was known as the Christ, the "anointed one". And this all implies very strongly that Jesus was, in fact, a historical figure, as was his brother. There's no reason to suggest any interpolations here at all, and certainly no reason to think that the passage is a forgery. It's widely known to be fully authentic (Josephus and Modern Scholarship, 1937-1980, p. 705). It holds up, and so does the case for the

historical Jesus. And incidentally, Feldman notes that this passage confirms the 'Testimonium Flavianum' in that it "indicates that Jesus had been mentioned previously" (Josephus and Modern Scholarship, 1937-1980, p. 690).

Zeitgeist also mentions that Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny the Younger all make reference to Jesus, which is entirely true, although the movie's reason for dismissing their testimony is extremely weak. Starting with the Roman historian Tacitus, he wrote:

Such indeed were the precautions of human wisdom. The next thing was to seek means of propitiating the gods, and recourse was had to the Sibylline books, by the direction of which prayers were offered to Vulcanus, Ceres, and Proserpina. Juno, too, was entreated by the matrons, first, in the Capitol, then on the nearest part of the coast, whence water was procured to sprinkle the fane and image of the goddess. And there were sacred banquets and nightly vigils celebrated by married women. But all human efforts, all the lavish gifts of the emperor, and the propitiations of the gods, did not banish the sinister belief that the conflagration was the result of an order. 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. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired. Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle, and was exhibiting a show in the circus, while he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer or stood aloft on a car. Hence, even for criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion; for it was not, as it seemed, for the public good, but to glut one man's cruelty, that they were being destroyed. (Annals 15.44)

The degree of detail we actually get from this is astounding. During the reign of Nero, there was a group of people known as Christians. They're named after a person called "Christus", who endured the "extreme penalty", an undoubted reference to crucifixion (cf. Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion*, pp. 2-3). This all happened in the province of Judaea while Pontius Pilatus was in charge, during the reign of Tiberius Caesar. The following of this "Christus"--a "most mischievous superstition", as Tacitus calls it--spread even to Rome. It should be very obvious that the only person crucified in Judaea under Pilate who was known as a messianic figure--the meaning of "Christus", after all--and whose followers survived around the empire, even in Rome, into the reign of Nero and were called "Christians", is the historical Jesus. Zeitgeist objects to this with the weak declaration that Jesus is here called "Christus", a Latinized form of his title instead of his name, as though it were therefore unclear who is under discussion. That just won't do, since it's obviously the same Jesus.

It's pretty clear that Suetonius has the same person in mind, but his testimony is much less useful. He wrote:

He suppressed all foreign religions, and the Egyptian and Jewish rites, obliging those who practised that kind of superstition, to burn their vestments, and all their sacred utensils. He distributed the Jewish youths, under the pretence of military service, among the provinces noted for an unhealthy climate; and dismissed from the city all the rest of that nation as well as those who were proselytes to that religion, under pain of slavery for life, unless they complied. He also expelled the astrologers; but upon their suing for pardon, and promising to renounce their profession, he revoked his decree. (Tiberius 36)

[Claudius] exonerated for ever the people of Ilium from the payment of taxes, as being the founders of the Roman race; reciting upon the occasion a letter in Greek, from the senate and people of Rome to king Seleucus, on which they promised him their friendship and alliance, provided that he would grant their kinsmen the Iliensians immunity from all burdens. He banished from Rome all the Jews, who were continually making disturbances at the instigation of one Chrestus. He allowed the ambassadors of the Germans to sit at the public spectacles in the seats assigned to the senators, being induced to grant them favours by their frank and honourable conduct. (Claudius 25)

In light of all of the above, it seems very plausible that Suetonius' "Chrestus"--a common Roman misspelling of "Christus"--is a reference to Jesus, and that the disturbances resulted from the early relationships in Rome between non-Christian Jews and Christians. It should be noted that the Latin phrase *similia sectantes*, which appears in the passage about Tiberius, might conceivably be better translated as "similar sects" and indicate the Christians, but that's speculative. Finally, Pliny the Younger governed the province of Bithynia for a while and wrote in a letter to the Emperor Trajan:

It is my practice, my lord, to refer to you all matters concerning which I am in doubt. For who can better give guidance to my hesitation or inform my ignorance? I have never participated in trials of Christians. I therefore do not know what offenses it is the practice to punish or investigate, and to what extent. [...] Soon accusations spread, as usually happens, because of the proceedings going on, and several incidents occurred. An anonymous document was published containing the names of many persons. Those who denied that they were or had been Christians, when they invoked the gods in words dictated by me, offered prayer with incense and wine to your image, which I had ordered to be brought for this purpose together with statues of the gods, and moreover cursed Christ--none of which those who are really Christians, it is said, can be forced to do--these I thought should be discharged. Others named by the informer declared that they were Christians, but then denied it, asserting that they had been but had ceased to be, some three years before, others many years, some as much as twenty-five years. They all worshipped your image and the statues of the gods, and cursed Christ. They asserted, however, that the sum and substance of their fault or error had been that they were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god, and to bind themselves by oath, not to some crime, but not to commit fraud, theft, or adultery, not falsify their trust, nor to refuse to return a trust when called upon to do so. When this was over, it was their custom to depart and to assemble again to partake of food--but ordinary and innocent food. Even this, they affirmed, they had ceased to do after my edict by which, in accordance with your instructions, I had forbidden political associations. Accordingly, I

judged it all the more necessary to find out what the truth was by torturing two female slaves who were called deaconesses. But I discovered nothing else but depraved, excessive superstition. (Letters 10.96)

What Pliny says is very important. Christians, according to the information Pliny gathered from those he pressured into apostasy, sang a hymn to Jesus "as to a god"; they gathered early on a particular day; they took oaths to live virtuously; and they assembled again for a meal, undoubtedly the eucharist, hence Pliny's mention of "ordinary and innocent food" to counter common rumors that Christians were cannibals. The line with the Latin phrase *quasi deo*, "as to a god", is critical, because it implies that Pliny thinks something very weird about this, as if the Christ in question were someone who wouldn't normally be worshipped. The clearest explanation, of course, is that Jesus was known to be a human being, hence Pliny's perplexity at the Christians' worship of him. And, again, it's obviously Jesus who's in sight here, not someone else, like the movie's makers might wish.

From all of these put together, I think that most people should be able to see that *Zeitgeist* is just wrong about Jesus. He was a real person in history. We have a great wealth of sources from within the New Testament itself, and we have several references from beyond it. For someone who never held political office, that's incredibly impressive! With that, I turn to *Zeitgeist*'s final two objections to the historicity of Jesus. First, there's a list presented of "historians", as the movie says, who never mentioned Jesus. And second, the movie declares:

You would think that a guy who rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven for all eyes to see and performed the wealth of miracles acclaimed to him would have made it into the historical record. It didn't because once the evidence is weighed, there are very high odds that the figure known as Jesus, did not even exist.

As we've seen, Jesus is mentioned in the historical record, and quite abundantly, especially considering his position. He may have been a miracle worker and may have risen from the dead, but he was also a traveling teacher and prophetic figure in a relatively insignificant province that was often held in contempt by the elite as a troublesome and seditious place. He didn't hold political office, he didn't lead an army, he never traveled to Rome. In short, he's just not the sort of fellow that most Roman historians would choose to mention. And, of course, if anyone happened to actually believe in his miracles, *Zeitgeist* wouldn't accept their testimony, since that would make them a Christian. Talk about stacking the deck! As for that list, it's crucially flawed. For one, it includes Livy, who died in 17 AD, before Jesus ever began his ministry! How an oversight like that got through, one can only imagine. Another figure on the list, Columella, left only a couple surviving works concerning agriculture and trees! Where exactly is Jesus supposed to fit in? Among just a few of the others, Phaedrus simply wrote fables, Quintilian was a rhetorician, Silius Italicus was an epic poet who wrote about the Second Punic War, and Gaius Valerius Flaccus wrote a poem called the *Argonautica* about Jason's search for the Golden Fleece. I could go on about many of the others, but this selection serves to point out how flawed the list is.

I could also discuss the claims made in Zeitgeist about Noah and Moses, but I don't think that's really necessary here. The cases made in the movie are hardly compelling, and even if accepted, they're irrelevant to the main topic. So looking back over all of this, what do we see? A few important things:

Zeitgeist distorts all the religions mentioned in terms of the basic facts about their fundamental stories. That includes Jesus, Attis, Dionysus, Krishna, Mithras, Horus, Adonis, Buddha, and a whole list of others. The comparisons it makes are just wrong. Zeitgeist oversimplifies ancient myths and relies on non-scholarly secondary sources instead of scholarly secondary sources or the primary sources themselves. Some of Zeitgeist's sources just fabricated material in hopes that no one would find out. Zeitgeist is based on astronomical and astrological ideas that don't fit with the time. Zeitgeist claims that Jesus never existed, but provides no evidence for its claim and fails to interact honestly with the evidence for the opposing side. In short, virtually any field Zeitgeist touches, it treats poorly. If something on par with Zeitgeist were ever offered in a serious college course as a response to an assignment, it would get a failing grade, for quite good reason. And the makers of the movie would have you believe that there's a vast religious conspiracy distorting facts, and that they're exposing the truth for all to see. Distortion of facts is the domain of Zeitgeist, as we've just seen. It doesn't deserve to be believed. What I think does deserve to be believed is a different story. So if you'll suffer through just one more ancient document, there's one last thing I'd like to share:

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the age to come. Amen.

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