



The Historical Evidence for Jesus

G. A. Wells

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In this thoroughly researched study, G.A. Wells has squarely faced the question of whether a man named Jesus lived, preached, healed, and died in Palestine during the early years of the first century of the Christian era - or indeed, at any time.

Building on the biblical studies of Christian theologians, Dr. Wells soberly demonstrates that we have no reliable eyewitnesses to the events depicted in the New Testament. He publicizes a fact known to theological scholars but little-known in the average Christian congregation: that the order of books of the New Testament is not an accurate chronological arrangement. Indeed, Paul, who never saw Jesus, wrote his epistles to early Christian congregations before the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John were written.

It may come as a great surprise to Christians and other monotheists, to agnostics, atheists, and humanists alike, that "the earliest references to the historical Jesus are so vague that it is not necessary to hold that he ever existed; the rise of Christianity can, from the undoubtedly historical antecedents, be explained quite well without him; and reasons can be given to show why, from about A.D. 80 or 90, Christians began to suppose that he had lived in Palestine about fifty years earlier."

The Historical Evidence for Jesus is not a frontal attack on Christians per se; rather it is an easily understood but scholarly examination of the evidence for many long-accepted notions about the "biography" of the man called Jesus. This book takes up and quotes extensively from the Epistles and the Gospels of the New Testament, thus letting the evidence speak for itself in words familiar to every Bible reader. For example, Wells closely compares what Paul said about Jesus with what the author of Matthew, who lived later, wrote of him. Then he explains why these discrepancies apparently exist. Startling indeed is his proof that "earlier writers sometimes make statements which positively exclude the idea that Jesus worked miracles, delivered certain teachings, or suffered under Pilate."

There is also interesting material on the topics of Jesus' supposed family, the so-called Shroud of Turin, and the myth-making that even today surrounds the figure of Jesus. Dr. Wells does not, however, attempt to demolish belief in God or the ethical precepts held by Christians. His presentation is always fair and couched in moderate tones.

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