

Some critics charge that the Gospels have obscured the historical Jesus of Nazareth by cloaking Him in layers of legend and myth. They claim that the Bible's stories of Christ's resurrection are myth, not history. There are at least FOUR REASONS why the mythological interpretation fails.

We saw last week how truly weak the myth concept is with regard to where some sceptics say that the facts lie.

Comparative literature demonstrates that myth takes a number of generations to develop. There are no parallels in other literature of myth developing and being believed in the presence of eye-witnesses and within the short time frame in which the New Testament was formed.

Historical research is on the side of an immediate belief in Jesus' resurrection. An early apostle's creed includes the Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:3-9) and has been dated by many scholars to within 3 to 7 years of Christ's death and resurrection. This implies prior public belief. Scholars agree that the first letters by St. Paul appeared within 25 years or less of Jesus ministry, and the four Gospels within 21 (and no later than 65 years). The preaching of the apostles always centered on the Resurrection. In a very short period of time, devout Jews throughout the Roman Empire who had formerly faithfully worshiped God on the seventh day of each week, converted to Christianity and began meeting on the first day, in celebration of Christ's resurrection.

Hundreds of witnesses saw Christ alive after his death. Once he appeared to 500 people at once (1 Corinthians 15:6).

Many of these eyewitnesses to Christ's public ministry were hostile toward the Jesus the Gospels describe (Matthew 12:22f). These opponents had both motives and means to correct falsehoods about Him had the first disciples attempted them. Yet their opportunity did not produce a serious correction.

The Gospels don't resemble either Greek myth or Jewish legend. In contrast to those, the Gospels understate and lack embellishment, yet contain details counterproductive to the invention of legendary heroes. For example, the following six factors in John chapter 20 are at odds with the tendency of legendary material:

With great restraint, no attempt is made to describe the resurrection itself.

Mary neither initially recognized the risen Jesus (the "hero") (John 20:14).

nor even considered that there was anything special about Him (John 20:16).

Indeed, even by the end of the day, the disciples (the secondary "heroes") were still in hiding "for fear of the Jews" (John 20:19).

And, were the Gospels the free creation of paternalistic bias, as feminists charge, it is incredible the writers would have chosen women to be the first witnesses of the risen Jesus. The testimony of women didn't even count legally.

Yet, it was their courage the morning after the Resurrection that put the men's contrasting cowardice to shame.

Jews were the poorest of candidates for inventing a mythical Christ. No other culture has so opposed mythically confusing deity with humanity, as did the Jewish.

THREE SKEPTICAL OBJECTIONS most frequently leveled by critics of Christ's resurrection...

- **The idea that Christ's resurrection is a myth, not history is based upon an anti-supernatural bias. This means that those who refuse to believe that God intervenes in the affairs of man will not believe the evidence no matter how convincing.**
- 1. The body was stolen.**
 - 2. Jesus only fainted and then recovered from His wounds.**
 - 3. The witnesses were just "seeing things."**

What are some things in the Gospel narrative that show it is not the stuff legends are made of? (See John 20)

- 1.** _____

- 2.** _____

- 3.** _____

- 4.** _____

- 5.** _____

- 6.** _____

