

I have now finished with my extensive comments on Jesus' burial. Some of you may be relieved to hear that. I know I am! That was the most intense thread that I've done on the blog since its inception over two years ago. It was really more like producing scholarship than anything else I've done. And I know that's not everyone's cup of tea.

So now I can move on to other things on the blog. If you weren't really into that more hard-core kind of thing, then I hope that the sorts of things that I'll be doing now for a while will strike your fancy.

I thought this would be a good time to pause and think a bit about the blog, and to hear your ideas and suggestions for it. As probably everyone on the blog knows, I have two major objectives in doing it, one far more major than the other.

The one that is *less* major for me is the one that is *more* major for virtually everyone else. I think it's safe to say that virtually everyone who has joined the blog has shelled out their hard-earned dollars for the privilege in order to hear more (and more and more) about the various topics that I focus on here.

The emphasis, of course, is on early Christianity: hence the name of the blog, "Christianity in Antiquity: the CIA." But I have defined that topic very broadly, and have tried to provide a good balance to the various posts that I make - as you can see simply by looking at the Member Categories and seeing the various posts under them. In my 28 months (count them, 28) of doing this blog I've covered a range of topics from the Greco-Roman world of the New Testament, ancient Judaism, the historical Jesus, the Gospels, the apostle Paul, early Christian apocrypha, manuscripts of the New Testament, and lots of other things, including some areas farther afield, such as the Hebrew Bible and Religion in the News.

I enjoy being able to cover so many different topics. It keeps things lively for me and keeps the blog from stagnating into being just about one thing. It's about a ton of things, but all of them related to early Christianity in one way or another.

The other major objective that I have - the one that is *more* important to me, and less important, I would judge, for everyone else - is to raise money for charity. That is the very *raison d'être* for the blog, and it's what keeps me going at it.

It's not that I don't want to provide all the content that I provide. I absolutely do. But at the end of the day, that's not why I do the blog. My sense is that *most* people who have blogs put in the effort because they want the wider world to know what they are thinking. That's certainly true, I think, of most blogs involving the New Testament, early Christianity, the historical Jesus and ... well, probably religion generally. But that's not what drives me. If it were up to me, by myself, I'd be happy not to do the blog, and just to write books. But doing the blog is a way for me to raise money for charities that I believe in and want to support.

My view is that everyone who is able to do something for charity (which would include most of us here) should do *something* — volunteer, give money, lend moral support, whatever. When I decided to start this blog it was because it seemed to me that this was a way for me to use whatever talents I have for a good cause, something that not everyone else, with their unique gifts, could do.

We've done a lot of good on this blog, raising money for charities dealing with hunger and homelessness. And I want us to do more and more.

And so that's the point of this post. Most of you are on the blog for one reason and I'm doing it, ultimately, for another reason. I need to make sure that both needs are being met, since the more attractive the blog is for you, the users, then the more attractive it will be for others so that they too will join up, and that will achieve my own aim. I think users get very good value for their money. A year's membership comes down to just over \$2 per month. And for that sum one gets 5-6 posts a week, at an average of a 1000 words per post (these posts on Jesus' burial were often longer, sometimes much longer). So, let's say that's 5500 words a week, or 22,000 words a month. For \$2. You can't get a Big Mac for \$2. You can barely get *half* of a Big Mac for \$2. And this blog is SO much better for you than a Big Mac.

As I indicated a couple of months ago, the blog has already earned over \$100,000. Every penny has gone to charity. I want it to do more. My immediate goal is to make it early \$100,000 per year. That's a way off, but it's doable.

And so, the short story: I want the membership on the blog to grow (and grow and grow). To that end, I would like your suggestions. What can I do to make it more attractive (the members' main interest) so that even more will join at an even faster pace so that it raises even more money for charity (my main interest?)

Make your comments to this post. I won't be able to respond to them all. And I won't be able to implement them all. But many of you have many good ideas, and I would like to hear them. Among other things I'd like to know whether you think that I'm posting too much. Or if posts are too long. Or if they are too technical. Or if there is not enough variety. Or if there are other kinds of broad topics that I should be addressing. Or if there are technical features of the blog itself that could be improved. Or if there are other ways that I can advertise and attract new members. Or use my resources to raise more money through the blog. (Everyone, btw, should feel free to make a donation, as generous as you can! It's easy to do, and always extremely appreciated.)

In your comments to this particular post, I'd rather that you not get into specific questions you'd like me to address ("What does 'Iscairiot' mean? Was the Life of Apollonius modeled on the Gospels? Was Paul gay? or whatever...). I'll ask for those questions in a subsequent post. For now I'm thinking more big picture. What can we do to improve? If the answer is "Nothing - it's perfect in every way" - that's fine too!

Let me conclude just by thanking everyone for supporting the blog and the charities that it is designed to help. I very much appreciate all the active, and passive, participation.



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