

I am now able to finish off this thread dealing with my debate with Robert Price on whether Jesus existed. I have already laid out most of the arguments that I gave during my 30-minute presentation at the debate. As I did in that talk, I now would like to set forth the argument that seems to me to be one of the most convincing of all.

Mythicists say that the early Christians invented historical man Jesus, that there never was such a real person. I think that view runs smack up against a brick wall. The early Christians claimed Jesus was the messiah. It was arguably the main thing they said about him - they said it so much that "Messiah" - or "Christ" - became Jesus' last name. They also claimed, incessantly, that he got crucified. Why would Jews invent a messiah who got crucified?

To explain the problem I have to provide a bit of background. That will be this post. Once that is done, in the post to follow, I'll explain why, given this background, it is completely implausible that Jews invented Jesus.

What I say below comes a post I made a year or so ago in another context dealing with a different issue. But the background information is the same. What did first century Jews expect from a messiah?

The word Messiah is a Hebrew term (the Greek equivalent is "Christ") which meant "anointed one." In Jewish circles the term goes back to a kind of royal ideology (i.e., understandings of the kingship) from centuries before Jesus. In the Old Testament, it was first and foremost the king of Israel who was thought to be the "anointed one." That's because at the king's coronation ceremony, he had, as part of the ritual, oil poured on his head to show that he was the one who stood under God's special favor. He was thus the messiah, the anointed one.

In one of our early narratives about kingship, we are told ...

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