

Several people have sent me private emails asking why René Salm was put on the program at the Society of Biblical Literature meeting, given the fact that he is not a scholar and has no credentials in the field. For those of you who don't know, Salm has written a book claiming that Nazareth did not exist in the first century, so that Jesus couldn't be there. He argues this in part because he doesn't think Jesus existed and so wants to discredit the Gospel stories by saying the Christian authors made the whole thing up.

Several scholars (well, everyone who mentioned it to me) were outraged that Salm was allowed to be on the program. This meeting is of a learned society and is to be for scholars with established expertise. It is not to be a venue for people without qualifications to spout their wild theories. Salm claims that those who oppose him have a theological or religious bias against his views, but this simply is not true. EVERYONE who is an expert opposes his views - Jewish, Christian, agnostic, or other. There is not a single archaeologist of ancient Israel that gives him the least credit. That doesn't make him wrong. But it does mean that if he wants to argue that every real scholar is in error, he should get some credentials first.

In any event, I thought it might be worthwhile to reprint here what I say about Salm's book in my book [Did Jesus Exist?](#) Apologies for those who have read this already. I have removed the footnotes here, but you can find them in the original.

The most recent critic to dispute the existence of Nazareth is René Salm, who has devoted an entire book to the question, called *The Myth of Nazareth*. Salm sees this issue as highly significant and relevant to the question of the historicity of Jesus: "Upon that determination [i.e., the existence of Nazareth] depends a great deal, perhaps even the entire edifice of Christendom.

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