

A lot of people (at least in my experience) think that Paul is the one who should be considered the “founder” of Christianity – that he is the one who took Jesus’ simple preaching about the coming kingdom of God and altered and expanded it into a complicated doctrine of sin and redemption, being the first of Jesus’ followers to maintain that it was the death and resurrection of Jesus that brought about salvation. In my previous post I tried to show that this can’t be the case, because Paul was persecuting Christians already before he had converted, and these were certainly people who believed in Jesus’ death and resurrection.

There is a second reason for thinking that Paul is not the one who invented the idea that Jesus’ death was some kind of atoning sacrifice for sins. That’s because Paul explicitly tells us that he learned it from others.

Those of you who are Bible Quiz Whizzes may be thinking about a passage in Galatians where Paul seems to say the opposite, that he didn’t get his gospel message from anyone before him but straight from Jesus himself (when he appeared to Paul at his conversion). I’ll deal with that passage in my next post, since I don’t think it says what people often claim it says. But first....

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