

In order to explain the view I started having about the Bible after I had come to realize that it was filled with discrepancies, contradictions, historical errors, and other mistakes - and yet remained a committed Christian - I have to set out my understanding at the time of the Bible as "myth." And to do that I have to give a very brief (though this will take a few posts) history of scholarship on the New Testament itself, specifically the Gospels. (What I say about the Gospels can be applied more broadly to the Bible, as I'll explain).

When I was preparing to write this post I *thought* I was simply going to be able to copy and paste this explanation from something I had written before. But I've looked everywhere, and I can't find that I've ever written about it in any context whatsoever, books, articles, blog posts, nada. How strange. I lecture on this all the time.

The history of Gospel scholarship is, of course, extraordinarily complex. There are hundreds of scholarly books and articles written on the Gospel of John every year probably. If you wanted to read literally everything on John written since, say, 1975, it would probably take you until 2025. Assuming you had nothing else to do. A *complete* history of scholarship would be impossible. But there have been major trends in the field, and what I want to do is explain in the most broad and basic terms possible the major shifts that happened in the field. Two major shifts, in a field that has experienced lots of shifts.

I will do so by explaining three major views of what the Gospels are. Are they historically accurate biographies of Jesus? Are they fairy tales? Are they something in between? What exactly? The three major views I'll sketch, as it turns out, can be traced chronologically: first there was this view, then there was that view, and then there was this other view. BUT I have to give a proviso. I do NOT mean ...

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