

On the blog some months ago I mentioned the “**Jesus and Brian**” conference in London this past summer, devoted to exploring the Historical Jesus in light of Monty Python’s Life of Brian. The event was held at the **King’s College London**, Edmond J Safra Lecture Theatre, King’s Building, Strand, London WC2R 2LS on June 20-22nd, 2014. I gave one of the talks at the conference, and it is provided here thanks to the labors of the audio-video team at Kings College and our support person, Steven Ray who had to manipulate it to improve the quality. Further details about the event can be read here:

<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/depts/trs/events/jandb/about.aspx>

Following is the abstract that I gave of my paper, in advance: When the Life of Brian first came out, I was a gung-ho, born-again, evangelical Christian in seminary, studying for ministry. Even though I found parts of the film hilarious (I tried not to laugh), other parts – not. Some of these were predictably offensive to a pious sensitivity (“Always look on the bright side of life”!); but one was not, a scene that received relatively little critical attention: when Brian finds himself among a group of street preachers proclaiming messages of coming apocalyptic doom. I strove hard to assure everyone I knew that first-century Palestine as not “like” that, filled with prophets anticipating the coming apocalypse – mainly because I realized what was at stake. If this was the context for Jesus’ own proclamation (not to mention Brian’s) then he was as duped as the others, and he did not stand out as the unique son of God with an unparalleled divine revelation. Now twenty-five later I realize just how wrong I was. As in so many other ways, the Life of Brian was humorously, but also incisively, on target. The widespread apocalyptic movement of Jesus’ day was indeed the milieu that makes best sense of his own message.

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