

CONTEMPORARY SCHOLARS' VIEWS ON THE HISTORICAL JESUS

I. E.P. SANDERS

A. Sanders' Method

1. Stresses the Synoptic Gospels

2. Social world of first-century Palestinian Judaism

B. Sanders' Portrait of Jesus

1. "Almost" Indisputable Facts about Jesus

- Jesus was born c. 4 BC, near the time of the death of Herod the Great
- He spent his early childhood and early adult years in Nazareth of Galilee
- He was baptized by John the Baptist
- He called disciples
- He taught in towns, villages, and countryside of Galilee (but not in cities)
- He preached 'the kingdom of God'
- About the year 30, Jesus went to Jerusalem for Passover
- He created a disturbance in the Temple area
- He had a final meal with the disciples
- He was arrested and interrogated by Jewish authorities
- He was executed on the orders of the Roman prefect, Pontius Pilate

2. Two Symbolic Actions by Jesus

a. First

b. Second

3. The Twelve Disciples = New Israel

4. Jesus was the Eschatological Prophet

5. Jesus Resurrection?

II. MARCUS BORG AND JOHN DOMINAC CROSSAN

Video Clip: *The Jesus Summit: The Historical Jesus and Contemporary Faith*. The Episcopal Cathedral Teleconferencing Network. 74 Trinity Place, New York, NY 10006.

A. Borg (*Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*)

1st foundation--Jesus was a deeply Jewish figure; didn't intend to start a new religion; he was doing something within Judaism

2nd foundation--context; the social world of 1st cent. Palestine; a domination system; a hierarchical and stratified society; peasant society dominated by elites; purity society with sharp social boundaries centered in the Temple; patriarchal society, a hierarchical society some men ruled over other men and all women and children

1st stoke is that he was a religious ecstatic. He had personal, mystical experiences of God

2nd stoke is that he was a healer; nature miracles are symbolic narrative; "I don't think Jesus did these"; Jesus did healings and exorcism

3rd stoke is that he was a wisdom teacher; he told aphorisms and parables

4th stoke is that he was a social prophet; social critic; challenges the politics of purity and advocated a politics of compassion, an egalitarian and inclusive social vision

5th stoke is that he was a movement founder; not the starter of an institution, but the founder of a following of people who embodied the alternative social vision of Jesus, the "open table fellowship of Jesus"

B. Crossan (*The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*)

III. THE JESUS SEMINAR

A. History

Chart # 1	
Red	Jesus undoubtedly said this or something very like it—"That's Jesus"
Pink	Jesus probably said something like this—"Sure sounds like Jesus."
Gray	Jesus did not say this, but the ideas contained in it are close to his own—"Well, maybe."
Black	Jesus did not say this; it represents the perspective or content of a later or different tradition—"There has been some mistake."

B. Phase One: The Sayings of Jesus

Chart # 2					
	Total Number of Sayings	Red Sayings	Pink Sayings	Gray Sayings	Black Sayings
Matt	420	11	60	115	234
Mark	177	1	18	66	92
Luke	392	14	65	128	185
John	140	0	1	5	134
Thom	201	3	40	67	91

Chart # 3
The following verses garnered the <u>most</u> votes for authenticity by the Jesus Seminar
1. "If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also" (Matt 5:39). 2. "If anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well" (Matt 5:40). 3. "Blessed are you who are poor. For yours is the kingdom of God" (Lk 6:20). 4. "If anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile" (Matt 5:41). 5. "Love your enemies" (Lk 6:27).

C. Phase Two: The Acts of Jesus

Chart # 4	
Red	The historical reliability of this information is virtually certain.
Pink	This information is probably reliable.
Gray	This information is possible but unreliable.
Black	This information is improbable.

D. Phase Three: The Person of Jesus

1. Jesus was a disciple of John the Baptist

2. Jesus was an iconoclastic poet

3. Jesus told parables and aphorisms that challenged the usual ways of thinking.

4. Jesus attracted followers

5. Jesus was eventually executed

E. Implications

F. Critics and Criticisms

1. Critics

Craig Blomberg

Luke Timothy Johnson

Richard Hays

2. Criticisms

- a. The *motives* of the Jesus Seminar are challenged
- b. The *tactics* of the Jesus Seminar are disparaged
- c. The *membership* of the Seminar has been questioned
- d. The *portrait* of Jesus is not sufficiently Jewish.
- e. The *methods* of the Seminar are criticized.
- f. They *equate* "unverifiable" with "unauthentic."