

The Fruits of Monotheism

Week 5: December 3, 2018

The Historical Jesus

We've seen how the onset of cosmic monism and the resulting problem of evil led to the emotionally satisfying solution of a second antagonistic power (cosmic dualism). We've seen how the "democratization" of piety and the martyrdom of Jews during the suppression of Judaism by Antiochus IV Epiphanes made the prophets' promise of divine justice delivered during one's lifetime an implausible claim, leading to the idea of an afterlife in which one would receive his just deserts. Finally, we've seen how the hope that Israel would be restored to greatness and the belief in the ultimate superiority of YHWH over the demonic force led to the idea that divine justice would be delivered during a final, climactic battle via resurrection and judgment of "many" of those who had died.

Now we address the question of whether Jesus held and preached the worldview of apocalypticism.

Reading:

Bart Ehrman, *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium*, p. 71-78
(Gospel of Thomas and Gnosticism) [[pdf](#)]

The Gospel of Thomas [[link](#)]

Bart Ehrman, *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium*, p. 103-166 (ch 7, 8, 9; the historical Jesus) [[pdf](#)]

Reading for our final meeting: We will read the Gospel of Mark (preferably in the NRSV translation [[pdf](#)]). I suggest that you read it ASAP in one or two sessions just as you'd read a novel (about two and a half hours).

[Note that I've added the introduction to Stephen Mitchell's translation of the Book of Job to the resources on the home page. I commend it to you.]