



The Historical Christ and the Jesus of Faith: The Incarnational Narrative as History

C. Stephen Evans

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The story of Jesus of Nazareth, as recounted in the New Testament, has always been understood by the church to be historically true. It is an account of the life, death, and resurrection of a real person, whose links with history are firmly signalled in the creeds of the early church, which affirm that Jesus 'suffered under Pontius Pilate'. Contemporary historical scholarship has, however, called into question the reliability of the church's version of this story,

and thereby raised the question as to whether ordinary people can know its historical truth.

This book argues that the historicity of the story still matters, and that its religious significance cannot be captured by the category of 'non-historical myth'. The commonly drawn distinction between the Christ of faith and Jesus of history cannot be maintained. The Christ who is the object of faith must be seen as historical; the Jesus who is reconstructed by historical scholarship is always shaped by commitments of faith. A reconsideration of the Enlightenment epistemologies that underlie much historical scholarship shows that historical knowledge of this story is still possible. Such knowledge can be inferential, based on historical evidence. A careful look at contemporary New Testament studies, and the philosophical and literary assumptions upon which it rests, shows that this scholarship should not undermine the confidence of lay people who believe that they can know that the church's story about Jesus is true.

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