

DAN BARKER DECONSTRUCTS JESUS!

Dan Barker is one of America's foremost atheists and 'freethinkers'. In my previous article *Dan Barker's Deconversion* I examined some of the reasons Barker outlines for his 'deconversion' from theist to atheist. His book, *Godless: How an Evangelical Preacher Became One of America's Leading Atheists*, comes out all-guns-blazing with a full frontal attack on the historicity of the Bible Jesus. Let's look at how Barker deconstructs Jesus.

Did Jesus Exist?

Barker confesses that when he was a Christian believer he never once doubted that Jesus was the historical person portrayed in the pages of the Bible. But since his 'deconversion' Barker is now thoroughly convinced that,

"The Jesus story is a combination of myth and legend, mixed with a little bit of real history unrelated to Jesus. Here's what I found out:

- 1) There is no external historical confirmation for the New Testament stories.
- 2) The New Testament stories are internally contradictory.
- 3) There are natural explanations for the origin of the Jesus legend.
- 4) The miracle reports make the story unhistorical.

The Jesus of history is not the Jesus of the New Testament." (1)

Wow! Let's examine this bold deconstruction. Was the Bible Jesus a real man or a myth? Christianity claims to tell the story of what God has done openly in Jesus in Israel between 5BC and AD 33, which is to say, examinable history.

When he was giving his defence before King Agrippa, the apostle Paul boldly asserted that the facts of Jesus and his resurrection from the dead had "not been done in a corner". Paul, a prisoner for the faith in Jesus he once persecuted, said to the king and the Roman governor Festus, "I utter words of sober truth. For the king knows about these matters" (Acts 26:25-26). From the get-go Christianity faced the world by claiming to be rooted and grounded in history. As John Dixon says,

"It is as if the Christian faith places its head on the chopping block of public scrutiny and invites us all to take a swing." (2)

And swing Barker does! For him there is "no external historical confirmation for the New Testament stories". So, let's take a look at the non-Biblical sources Barker disdains.

Philo-Judaeus.

Barker is incredulous that one of the best-known Jewish writers contemporary with Jesus does not once mention Jesus Christ. But does this argument from silence carry serious historical weight?

Philo (b. 15-10 BC d. 40-50 AD) lived in Alexandria, Egypt, and wrote copiously trying to fuse the Jewish faith with Hellenism. Barker thinks that since Philo was living in or near Jerusalem when Christ's miraculous birth and the Herodian massacre occurred, and since he was there when Christ made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem and when the crucifixion with its attendant earthquake and supernatural darkness occurred, and since the resurrection took place with its

reported "buzz" in Jerusalem, surely these marvellous events would have filled Philo with awe. But Philo saw it not! (3)

Whoa Barker! Hold your horses before they bolt away with unbridled claims! Let's get some historical perspective here. We know Philo was born and educated in Alexandria, Egypt. His Jewish family was very wealthy, and Philo moved in the upper crust of a multi-cultural society. Philo wrote many books concerned to marry his Jewish faith with Hellenic society. But according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica there is only "one identifiable event in Philo's life" and it occurred in the year 39 or 40 when he headed an embassy of Jewish delegates to the Emperor Caligula following a pogrom in Alexandria. There is absolutely no record of Philo living in or near Jerusalem. That is pure speculation by Barker. (4)

Indeed, it is reasonably certain Philo lived in Egypt all his life. Nor is it any wonder he failed to mention Herod's massacre of the infants in one little village in Judea. Herod's megalomaniacal violence and murders were commonplace, so this incident in a tiny village would have hardly raised an eyebrow for anybody familiar with Herod --- unless the inside story for his motives on this occasion were known, as is claimed by Matthew.

It is also understandable Philo failed to mention the events in Jerusalem surrounding Jesus. To somebody living in Egypt the rumour of another would-be messiah would have sounded all too familiar. There had been many failed pretenders before, and no doubt many more to come.

Remember also, that Jesus' followers were not rebelling against Rome with swords and spears. Quite the contrary. So initially the political establishment never took Jesus and his followers seriously. Even after Jesus' resurrection the authorities did not take the first Christians seriously, for we know that in the first decades the Christian believers worshipped in the synagogues. The Romans initially confused them as being just another Jewish sect and part of that establishment.

After the report of Jesus' resurrection the Jewish authorities bribed the Roman guards with a huge sum of money to spread the rumour that the disciples had stolen the body (this fact is corroborated in extra-Biblical Jewish sources as well as by Matthew). As a member of a very wealthy Jewish family in Alexandria, Philo would have naturally sided with this official party line, even if the initial rumour interested him. And his embassy to Emperor Caligula proves that as "an old man" he was still very much entrenched on the Jewish side of politics.

Therefore, I find it incredible that Barker is prepared to accept the silence of Philo who as far as the records go, was not living in Israel, to be the 'Gospel truth' over and against the eyewitness accounts of those who saw Jesus with their eyes, and touched him with their hands (I John 1:1-2).

History is not reconstructed on silence. It seems Barker is constructing his own hopeful myth in a rush to bolster confirmation bias!

Flavius Josephus.

Josephus (b 37 AD) is without doubt the most significant Jewish historian (outside the NT accounts) of the First Century. Josephus was a Jewish priest, a Pharisee, and later in life became an apologist for the Romans after Jerusalem and the Temple had been destroyed in the Jewish War of 66 to 74 AD.

In *The Antiquities* Josephus describes how a high priest named Ananias took advantage of the death of the Roman governor Festus (mentioned in Acts 25) to get James killed:

"He convened a meeting of the Sanhedrin and brought before them a man named James, the brother of Jesus, who was called the Christ, and certain others. He accused them of having transgressed the law and delivered them up to be stoned." (5)

Barker alleges this testimony is "flimsy" and that "many scholars widely consider this to be a doctored text." (6) However, such broad dismissal of this paragraph by mainstream scholarship is just not so.

Edwin M. Yamauchi PH.D (with Bachelor's degree in Hebrew and Hellenistics, doctoral degrees in Mediterranean studies, and awarded 8 fellowships and studied 22 languages, including Arabic, Chinese, Egyptian, Russian, Syriac, Ugaritic and Commanche --- the last of which should impress Barker who himself is a native American) states,

"I know of no scholar who has successfully disputed this passage ... if this had been a later Christian addition to the text, it would have likely been more laudatory of James. So here you have a reference to the brother of Jesus --- who had apparently been converted by the appearance of the risen Christ, if you compare John 7:5 and I Corinthians 15:7 --- and corroboration of the fact that some people considered Jesus to be the Christ, which means 'the Anointed One' or 'Messiah.'" (7)

Perhaps Barker is confusing this genuine paragraph with a later one written by Josephus that is widely considered even by Christian scholars to have been subsequently doctored by later apologists? It appears in *Testimonium Falvianum*. I will underline the words the majority of scholars consider to be later interpolations - words that almost certainly did not come from Josephus' pen --

"About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was one who wrought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Christ. When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing among us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who had in the first place come to love him did not give up their affection for him. On the third day he appeared to them restored to life, for the prophets of God had prophesied these and countless other marvellous things about him. And the tribe of Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared." (8)

Barker wonders how we can prove any part of this paragraph is reliable, since some words are clearly forged. However, Dr Yamauchi expresses a more measured view when he says this passage "probably was originally written about Jesus" but without the underlined words.

It's highly unlikely Josephus who never confessed personal faith in Jesus as the Christ would have admitted that Jesus should not be called a man, that he "was the Christ" and that he rose again to life on the third day as predicted by the Jewish prophets. These are three specific Christian confessions that Josephus (an unbeliever) would almost certainly never have written, especially since he was in Rome writing after the Jewish war. That would have been considered high treason against the Emperor who apparently was sponsoring his writings. (9)

Josephus was primarily interested in political matters and the Jewish struggle against Rome. That's why for him John the Baptist was more noteworthy, because initially he represented a greater political threat through his populist movement than Jesus did. Josephus agrees with the NT witness that huge crowds followed John and that Herod,

"... feared lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to raise a rebellion (for they seemed ready to do anything he should advise), thought it best by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause ..." (10)

This passage is considered genuine. What then can we objectively say about Josephus? Well, for starters, we do know Josephus' accounts of the Jewish War have proved very reliable. Excavations (for example at Masada) have corroborated his history. Roman historians such as Tacitus also corroborate his detailed history.

True, like ancient historians Josephus had a penchant for overstating numbers for dramatic affect. But a few words obviously forged by later scribes in one paragraph do not cancel out Josephus' overwhelming historical accuracy. Barker's estimation that Jesus was of too little consequence and his deeds too trivial to merit a line from Josephus' pen is woefully short of the facts. Josephus gives irrefutable non-Biblical verification for the historicity of Jesus.

Tacitus.

Tacitus was the most important Roman historian of the First Century. Most of what we learn about the Roman emperors comes from his famous *Histories and Annals* that are considered masterpieces of historiography.

Cornelius Tacitus wrote in 115 AD the most important reference to Jesus outside the NT. But Barker dismisses anything written beyond 100 AD as being too far removed from its source. This is an arbitrary line and an evasion of what historians consider reliable history.

Tacitus writes concerning how Nero persecuted Christians in order to draw away suspicion from himself for the great fire that devastated Rome in 64 AD. Here is what Tacitus wrote:

"Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome ... Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty: then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind." (11)

This is an important testimony by an unsympathetic Roman historian to the widespread success of Christianity based on the historical Jesus. Tacitus says Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate. Tacitus says an "immense multitude" based their faith on a crucified man. Remember that crucifixion was the most horrible and humiliating form of capital punishment that Rome dished out only to non-Romans. Until Jesus Christ, nobody in the Empire worshipped publicly shamed and crucified criminals. There was something different about Jesus of Nazareth and his ardent followers that arrested Tacitus' attention!

Pliny The Younger

Writing at the same time as Tacitus, another Roman by the name of Pliny the Younger (AD 61-113) corroborated that Christianity had by now spread widely throughout the Empire, touching every class of person, and every language and nationality, and that in spite of serious Roman persecutions.

These Roman historians were no fans of Jesus but give irrefutable proof of the historicity of the Jesus story outside the Bible. On this mainstream historians agree.

Mara Bar-Serapion

Sometime after 70 AD, a Syrian philosopher named Mara Bar-Serapion, writing to encourage his son, compared the life and persecution of Jesus with that of other philosophers who were persecuted for their ideas. Mara Bar-Serapion refers to Jesus as the "Wise King":

"What benefit did the Athenians obtain by putting Socrates to death? Famine and plague came upon them as judgment for their crime. Or the people of Samos for burning Pythagoras? In one moment their country was covered with sand. Or the Jews by murdering their wise king? ... After that their kingdom was abolished. God rightly avenged these men ...The wise king ... Lived on in the teachings he enacted."

Here is another very early non-Biblical reference confirming Jesus was a wise and influential man who died for His beliefs. We learn the Jewish leadership was somehow responsible for Jesus' death, and Jesus' followers adopted His beliefs and lived their lives accordingly.

Barker dismisses the reliability of this source because Mara Bar-Serapion says the Jews killed their "wise King". According to Barker, "the New Testament reports that, the Romans, not the Jews, killed Jesus." So Bar-Serapion's testimony "is worthless as evidence for Jesus of Nazareth ..." (12)

Here Barker betrays his serious lack of historical credibility. It is a matter of historical record that the Romans reserved the right of capital punishment in vassal Israel. This is why the Sanhedrin had to defer to Pilate so their wishes to eliminate Jesus could be carried out. In agreement with this historical reality, the New Testament is writ large with the knowledge it was the Jewish hierarchy under the high priest and the ruling Sanhedrin, whose machinations had Jesus arrested, tried and, under the Romans, crucified. Mara Bar-Serapion proves Barker's assertions are historically worthless!

Suetonius (69-140AD)

Suetonius was a Roman historian and annalist of the Imperial House under the Emperor Hadrian. His writings describe Christian treatment under the Emperor Claudius (41-54 AD):

"Because the Jews at Rome caused constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus (Christ?), he (Claudius) expelled them from the city (Rome)."
(Life of Claudius, 25:4)

For Barker, a Roman historian writing around the turn of the century is way too late to be taken seriously. But this is still within the memory of first and second generation Christians! Barker also thinks Chrestus is the name of a slave and does

not mean Christ. This may or may not be so. But it is significant that another reliable historian, Dr Luke confirms Seutonius' statement. In Acts 18:2 Luke wrote that Paul met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, "because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome"! This meets the criterion of multiple independent attestation considered vital in historical study.

Let's Pretend.

Space forbids me to cite many more ancient non-Biblical sources confirming the Jesus story. Most of these sources, whether Jewish or Gentile, were either unsympathetic or outright hostile to Jesus and the early Christians. They therefore give unbiased credibility to the history in the New Testament. Even if we did not have the New Testament histories of Jesus, Dr. Yamauchi says these extra-Biblical accounts supply enough important historical outline to be able to say,

"... that first, Jesus was a Jewish teacher; second, many people believed that he performed healings and exorcisms; third, some people believed he was the Messiah; fourth, he was rejected by the Jewish leaders; fifth, he was crucified under Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius; sixth, despite his shameful death, his followers, who believed that he was still alive, spread beyond Palestine so that there were multitudes of them in Rome by A.D. 64; and seventh, all kinds of people from the cities and countryside --- men and women, slave and free --- worshipped him as a god." (13)

Impressive independent corroboration by anybody's standards surely? Yet, it is at this point that Barker wanders further into wishful thinking. He says, that if we stick to the NT (and he says we have no other choice) the first four books by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were not the first Christian books written. The apostle Paul wrote the earliest books in the mid to late 50's A.D. (how much earlier does Barker want his evidence before he will accept it as relevant to the historical Jesus, given this is a mere 20 odd years since Jesus?). But he argues, Paul never met Jesus and mentions very little about him as an historical man. He writes,

"The Jesus of whom Paul writes is a disembodied, spiritual Christ, speaking from the sky, not a flesh and blood man of history." (14)

This is a clever line used by many skeptics. Barker touts their collective scepticism by alleging,

"The 'silence of Paul' is one of the thorny problems confronting defenders of a historical Jesus. The Christ in Paul's writings is a different character from the Jesus of the Gospels. Paul adds not a speck of historical documentation for the story." (15)

However, the facts are that Paul does refer to Jesus as a descendant of David, that he was the Messiah, that he was betrayed, tried and crucified and buried under Pontius Pilate, and that he was raised again the third day and physically seen by many reliable witnesses. He speaks of "the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ" as being common knowledge both to himself and amongst all early Christians (I Tim. 6: 3). Paul quotes Jesus' instructions to missionaries, Jesus' teachings on marriage and love for enemies.

Paul corroborates all the essential history and character of Jesus. Because he was radically converted from Pharisaic Judaism to firm follower of Jesus Christ, Paul was mainly interested in interpreting and applying the meaning of Christ's teachings and work that had so radically changed the theological landscape all around him. (16)

Alexander the Great.

But what of Barker's thesis that the early Christians wanted to make their hero nothing less than what was claimed for other saviours of the surrounding pagan religions, simply cutting their story from the same fabric as pagan mythology? History does demonstrate how myths morph. I mean, is Elvis really dead? (Just kidding!)

Consider Alexander the Great. As with Jesus there are legendary biographies of his great career written after his untimely death at the height of his exploits. We have accounts (written 400 years later) of his supernatural birth and eulogies making him out to be a departed demi-god. Legends do grow up long after the event.

True, yet nobody questions the facts of Alexander's deeds and historicity. It's easy to separate the facts from fiction. Nobody questions his conquest of the known world. Nobody denies his incredible tactics and victory over the Persians. Alexander's affect on our world's culture to this day has been truly significant. No historian doubts he really lived. I doubt Barker himself would deny the existence of Alexander just because a few biographers embellished his story posthumously.

The same criteria hold for the so-called prophet of Islam, Mohammed. Post-humus miracles of mythological proportions have clearly been added long after his death. But these accretions do not mean Mohammed was not a real historical figure. The difference between the stories of the miraculous between Mohammed and Jesus is that Mohammed denied he could work any miracles. He admitted he was powerless in that department! It's highly unlikely that a man who denied his ability to work miracles while alive is suddenly able to work one after his death by ascending bodily to heaven! That is incongruent. It's also a myth mimicking somebody else's ascension story!

Unlike other religious texts such as the Quran and the Vedas, the books of the New Testament have always been recognized as *historical* texts. But even non-Biblical sources admit *something* amazing happened around Jesus. Naturally enough they ascribed Jesus' miracles to the Devil and magic, but his friends saw this as proof God was at work in him. Jesus' miracles fit his story like hand-in-historical-glove. You be the judge based on that evidence.

And who will deny the world-wide affect of Jesus to this day? By the same historical criteria we use for Alexander and Mohammed, Jesus must have been real. Unlike Alexander and Mohammed though, Jesus was a humble man. He left no monuments, no coins with his image, no armies, nothing considered successful by this world's standards. And yet from his example and teaching, from his humiliating execution and his conquering the grave has gone forth an energy, a life and spirit of unparalleled dimensions.

Gnostic Gospels

It is more reasonable to assume the Bible Jesus lived than that the whole thing is a confidence trick of mammoth proportions. To reject the historicity of Jesus because some later Gnostic writers claimed impossible supernatural feats for Jesus (such as the Gospel of Peter's report that when Jesus stepped out of the tomb he was so tall

that his head was as high as the clouds in the sky!) is to cast all ancient history out as spurious.

Indeed, the Gnostic Gospels such as those that bear the names of Thomas, Judas and Philip show almost a total lack of interest in the history of the man Jesus. They don't care where Jesus was born or how, where he grew up, what interactions he had with the Jewish authorities or the man and woman on the street he touched. The Gnostic Jesus is a non-historical figure beamed down from heaven to initiate the select few into secret knowledge. Then he was quickly whisked back up into heaven to escape this corrupt world.

Because the Gnostic Gospels were composed two to three hundred years after Jesus they were not accepted by the Christians of the first and second centuries, and because their teachings cannot be corroborated by any other texts, mainstream scholars consider their accounts of little or no consequence in the study of the historical Jesus. Mr Barker, it's easy separating fact from fabricated fictions!

The Day the Sun Failed.

It's common to dismiss the history of Jesus by saying the supernatural phenomena that accompanied his death and resurrection are add-ons by later Christian apologists.

OK. We only have space for one miracle that Barker dismisses: The one about world-wide darkness as Jesus hung on the cross.

"Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour"
(Matthew 27:45; Mark 15:33).

Luke adds a little descriptive phrase at the end of his report. He says this darkness over the "whole land" was because "the sun was being obscured" (Luke 23:45 NASB). It's common for folks to think this was an eclipse because the Greek verb used here for "obscured" (*eklipontos*) sounds like our English word for eclipse. Early non-Biblical references to this event explained it as a natural phenomenon, that is, as a solar eclipse.

However, Luke has already used this word twice in his Gospel and it does not mean a solar eclipse. In Luke 16:9 Jesus talks about the need to make friends for yourselves by wisely using the riches of unrighteousness to create friends, so that when wealth fails (*eklipee*) they may receive you into eternal dwellings.

And in Luke 22:32 Jesus says to Peter, "I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail (*eklipee*) ..." In these two previous verses, the word means "fail, cease". So was this darkness covering the whole land the result of a natural solar eclipse? And was the "whole land" referring only to the land of Israel, or was it a darkness that fell over the whole inhabited world? Sounds like a story of mammoth proportions to Barker.

It so happens there was an historian named Thallus who in 52 A.D. wrote a history of the eastern Mediterranean world since the Trojan War. Thallus' original history has disappeared (much to Barker's delight), however it was quoted by Julius Africanus around 221 A.D. In his third book Thallus made reference to the darkness recorded by the Gospels. There he explains away the darkness as being just a solar eclipse.

However, Africanus rejects Thallus' solar eclipse explanation given it happened at the time of Jesus' crucifixion. Here is what scholar Paul Maier says about the darkness based on this discussion:

"This phenomenon, evidently, was visible in Rome, Athens, and other Mediterranean cities. According to Tertullian ... it was a 'cosmic' or 'world event.' Phlegon, a Greek author from Caria writing a chronology soon after 137 A.D. reported that in the fourth year of the 202nd Olympiad [i.e. 33 A.D.] there was 'the greatest eclipse of the sun' and that 'it became night in the sixth hour of the day [noon] so that the stars even appeared in the heavens. There was a great earthquake in Bithynia, and many things were overturned in Nicaea.'" (17)

Here is extra-Biblical confirmation of the miraculous darkness over "the whole land" when Jesus was crucified. People at the time felt they needed a natural explanation for the phenomenon. But careful reading of Luke's telling does not mean it was a natural solar eclipse. How could it be? Easter happens when it's full moon making a solar eclipse impossible --- even ancient skeptics knew when the full moon occurs it's on the opposite side of the earth from the sun making it impossible to move between the sun and the earth. But they still had to come up with an explanation for this supernatural occurrence. Once again Dr Luke proves himself a very careful and reliable historian.

Conclusion

The science of history looks for at least two corroborating streams when determining historical probability --- multiple and independent witnesses. Barker does not accept the collective witness of the non-Biblical sources looked at in this brief article. Mainstream and peer-reviewed historians do for the precise reason the Jesus story ticks all the right historical criteria. (18)

Barker's attempts to dismiss these multiple and independent witnesses is selective and arbitrary. As Dr Yamauchi states, "From time to time some people have tried to deny the existence of Jesus, but this is really a lost cause." (19) Which is to say, Jesus' historical existence is beyond all reasonable doubt. Barker's attempt to deconstruct the Bible Jesus shows he is barking up the wrong tree of legendary proportions!

Nor does Barker accept there are at least five other reliable and independent historical texts --- the four NT Gospels and the apostle Paul's letters. When it comes to these records, Barker thinks he has another ace up his sleeve. He thinks the NT is replete with contradictions. I will deal with that question in the next article.

ENDNOTES

1. Barker, Dan. *Godless: How an Evangelical Preacher Became One of America's Leading Atheists*. Ulysses Press, Berkeley, CA., 2008. p251-252
2. Dixon, John. *The Christ Files: How Historians Know What They Know About Jesus*. Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2005, 2010. P 16
3. *Godless, Op. Cit.* p 253-254. Barker is here citing John E. Remsburg from *The Christ*.
4. This fact is also stated in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, "Little is known of Philo's life except one incident that happened in A.D. 39, at which time he called himself an 'old man' ..."
5. Josephus. *The Antiquities* 18:5:2
6. *Godless, Op. Cit.* p258
7. Quoted in *The Case For Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus* by Lee Strobel. Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1998. p 102-103
8. *The Antiquities, Op. Cit.* 18.63-64
9. The reading of this 'doctored' paragraph is based on the Greek manuscripts available. However, there is reason to believe one ancient Arabic manuscript containing the more hesitant words, "he was *perhaps* the Messiah-Christ" and "they *reported* that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive" preserves Josephus' original. Israeli historian of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Schlomo Pines in *An Arabic Version of the Testimonium Flavian and Its Implications* discusses this.
10. *The Antiquities Op. Cit.* 20.200.
11. Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44
12. *Godless, Op. Cit.* p 261
13. *The Case for Christ, Op. Cit.* p 115
14. *Godless, Op. Cit.* p 264
15. *Ibid*, p 265
16. One has to wonder whether Barker has read any serious historical reconstructions of Jesus' resurrection or how the apostle Paul's theology is squarely in line with First Century Pharisaic notions of bodily resurrection. Tom Wright in his massive tome titled *The Resurrection of the Son of God* for example, is a contemporary masterpiece on this question.
17. Maier, Paul, L. *Pontius Pilate*. Tyndale House, Wheaton, Ill, 1968. p. 366 citing a fragment from Phlegon, *Olympiades he Chronika* 13, ed. Otto Keller, *Rerum Naturalium Scriptores Graeci Minores*, 1 (Leipzig, Teurber, 1877. P 101 Translation by Maier.
18. For a sample list of peer-reviewed majority and mainstream scholarship see *The Christ Files, Op. Cit.* pp 22-23
19. *The Case For Christ, Op. Cit.* p 106