

Meeting Jesus For the First Time
Marcus Borg

He claims that our image of Jesus affects our perception of the Christian life by:

- Make Christianity credible or incredible

The most common image of Jesus is that of the “popular image” of divine savior, to die for the sins of the world - a fideistic image.

The second image of Jesus is as teacher, telling us to live as he said we should. This leads to a moralistic image.

The author claims both are inadequate.

The author believes in the Holy Trinity (I do not).

In his early teens, he began to have doubts about God’s existence. The modern worldview, with scientific explanations for phenomenon, cause and effect, made believing in God more difficult.

It became o.k. to not take the Bible and teachings literally. He considered himself a “closet agnostic.”

He learned that his childhood perception of Jesus as the Son of God who offered up his life for the sins of the world was not historically accurate.

How does he know this?

He believes that the gospels were neither divine documents nor straightforward historical records. Not eyewitness accounts either.

Again, how does he know this?

Two factors were at work:

- The traditions about Jesus, he claimed, were adapted and applied to the changing circumstances of the early Christian movement.
- The movement’s beliefs about Jesus grew during those decades

What does this mean?

Thus the gospels are the church’s memories of the historical Jesus transformed by the community’s experience and reflection in the decades after Easter.

Meaning, historical context?

I learned that Jesus as a human being – the historical Jesus – was quite different. He would not have known any of those things about himself (divine, coequal with God, the second person of the trinity, etc.

What?! Why not?!

The depiction of Jesus in John 3:16 (gave his only begotten Son...) differs from the picture of Jesus in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the synoptic (common view from similarity of context) gospels.

In John,

- Jesus is a divine person who speaks in “I am” statements.
- The Christ of faith, but not of history.
- He never says the words of John 3:16.

In the synoptic gospels, his message is not about himself.

One must be historically inaccurate.

Results of his work at seminary:

- We can't know much at all about the Jesus of history.
- He proclaimed the end of the present world and the coming of the Kingdom of God in the very near future.

How his beliefs changed:

- God refers to the sacred at the center of existence, the holy mystery that is all around us and within us.
- Mystical experiences are extraordinary but quite common, across cultures and throughout history.

- Jesus was deeply involved in the social world of the everyday, he was also grounded in the world of the Spirit.

But what does this mean, exactly?