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DEFENDING THE NEW TESTAMENT JESUS

by Lee Strobel

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SYNOPSIS

The historic picture of Jesus is under an intellectual onslaught from radical scholars, popular historians, television documentaries, feature films, bestselling authors, Internet bloggers, Muslim debaters, and atheist think tanks. They are capturing the public's imagination with a radical new portrait of Jesus that bears scant resemblance to the picture historically embraced by the church; but how persuasive is this new image of Jesus?

Two of the most popular challenges to Christianity are decisively debunked once they are thoroughly investigated. First, some charge that the New Testament's picture of Jesus cannot be trusted because the church has tampered with the text, but a balanced analysis of the evidence supports the conclusion that no essential doctrine of the church or belief about Jesus is jeopardized by any scribal errors or changes. Second, others tout the theory that Christianity is a "copycat" religion that stole its basic beliefs—including the resurrection—from earlier "mystery religions." This argument quickly falls apart under scrutiny: knowledgeable scholars have documented that Jesus' resurrection is a unique belief that has no connection to the mythological stories about dying and rising gods that were tied to vegetation cycles. The nearly universal consensus of experts, moreover, is that these mythological tales postdate Christianity.

Best-selling books and Web sites claim that Christianity derived its beliefs and practices from a mystery religion called Mithraism, but scholars have refuted this idea by showing that the parallels are inaccurate, are too vague to be meaningful, or involve reading Christian practices into Mithraic rituals that bear no resemblance to the rites of Christianity.

Please help me. I have just read Bart Ehrman's book *Misquoting Jesus*....This book has devastated my faith....Is Ehrman correct?²

From the Internet to television documentaries, from college classrooms to popular books, Jesus is under fire from radical scholars, skeptical bloggers, Muslim debaters, and militant atheists. These challenges to the church's historic picture of Jesus have intensified in the decade since my book *The Case for Christ*³ summarized the affirmative evidence for Jesus being the unique Son of God who authenticated His identity by returning from the dead.

It was time again for me to do research for my new book, *The Case for the Real Jesus*, and to interview leading experts about the most troubling claims skeptics were advancing. Among the most damaging charges are the assertion that the Bible's portrait of Jesus can't be trusted because the church tampered

with the text, and the theory that Christianity merely stole its essential beliefs from earlier “mystery” religions.

IS THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXT RELIABLE?

The best-selling book *Misquoting Jesus: The Story behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (HarperSanFrancisco, 2005) by Bart D. Ehrman, a Christian-turned-agnostic who casts doubt on the reliability of the New Testament text, is part of a wide-ranging attack on the traditional understanding of Jesus. Ehrman has alarmed the public by pointing out that the number of variants, or differences, between various handwritten New Testament manuscripts total between 200,000 and perhaps 400,000.⁴

“How does it help us to say that the Bible is the inerrant word of God if in fact we don’t have the words that God inerrantly inspired, but only the words copied by the scribes—sometimes correctly but sometimes (many times!) incorrectly?” Ehrman asked.⁵

Even more shockingly, Ehrman said that some scribes through the centuries *intentionally* tampered with the text for theological and other reasons. “In some instances,” he said, “the very meaning of the text is at stake, depending on how one resolves a textual problem.”⁶

Manuscripts and Variants

To get the other side of the story, I flew to Dallas to interview Daniel B. Wallace, professor of New Testament studies at Dallas Seminary and executive director of the Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts.

“On one level,” I observed, “it seems Ehrman has merely told a general audience about the kind of issues that textual critics have grappled with for centuries.”

“That’s right. He peeled back the curtain on scholarly work, and that revelation alarmed many Christians, who weren’t equipped to fully understand the issues,” said Wallace. “On another level, though, he tries to create strong doubt as to what the original text said, using more innuendo than substance. Readers end up having far more doubts about what the Bible says than any textual critic today would ever have. I think Ehrman has simply overstated his case.”

I asked Wallace about the quantity and quality of the New Testament manuscripts that scholars possess. The more copies they have, the easier it is to discern the contents of the originals that have long ago crumbled into dust.

“Quite simply, we have more witnesses to the text of the New Testament than to any other ancient Greek or Latin literature. It’s really an embarrassment of riches,” he said.

“We have more than 5,700 Greek copies of the New Testament. There are another 10,000 copies in Latin. Then there are versions in other languages—Coptic, Syriac, Armenian, Georgian, and so on. These are estimated to number between 10,000 and 15,000. So right there we’ve got 25,000 to 30,000 handwritten copies of the New Testament.

“Now, if we were to destroy all of these manuscripts, would we be left without a witness?” he asked. “Not at all. The ancient church fathers quoted so often from the New Testament that it would be possible to reconstruct almost the entire New Testament from their writings alone.”

I asked Wallace about the dates of the manuscripts. “About ten percent of these manuscripts come from the first millennium,” he said. “Through the first three centuries, we have nearly fifty manuscripts in Greek alone.”

“So we have a really small gap, then, between the actual earliest papyrus and the New Testament documents,” I said.

“Right. There’s just no comparison to others,” he said. “For other great historians, there’s a three hundred-year gap before you get a sliver of a fragment, and then sometimes you have to wait another thousand years before you see something else.”

“What about the two hundred thousand to maybe four hundred thousand variants between New Testament manuscripts? Are they really significant—and do they jeopardize the traditional picture of Jesus?” I wondered.

“Somewhere between seventy to eighty percent of all textual variants are spelling differences that can’t even be translated into English and have zero impact on meaning,” Wallace explained.

“Then you’ve got nonsense errors, where a scribe was inattentive and makes a mistake that’s an obvious no-brainer to spot,” he added. “There are also variants involving synonyms. Does John 4:1 say, ‘When Jesus knew’ or ‘When the Lord knew’? We’re not sure which one goes back to the original, but both words are true. A lot of variants involve the Greek practice of using a definite article with a proper name, which we don’t do in English. For example, a manuscript might refer to ‘the Mary’ or ‘the Joseph,’ but the scribe might have simply written ‘Mary’ or ‘Joseph.’ Again, there’s no impact on meaning, but they’re all counted as variants.”

“On top of that, you’ve got variants that can’t even be translated into English. Greek is a highly inflected language. That means the order of words in Greek isn’t as important as it is in English. For example, there are 16 different ways in Greek to say, ‘Jesus loves Paul,’ and they would be translated into English the very same way. Still, it counts as a textual variant if there’s a difference in the order of words, even if the meaning is unaffected.”

“So if we have approximately 200,000 to 400,000 variants among the Greek manuscripts, I’m just shocked that there are so few!” he declared. “What would the potential number be? Tens of *millions*! Part of the reason we have so many variants is because we have so many manuscripts. And we’re glad we’ve got so many manuscripts—it helps us immensely in getting back to the original.”

I asked, “How many textual variants really make a difference?”

“Only about one percent of variants are both meaningful, which means they affect the meaning of the text to some degree, and viable, which means they have a decent chance of going back to the original text. But most of these are not very significant at all,” he said.

“Give me an example,” I replied.

“I’ll describe two of the most notorious issues. One involves Romans 5:1. Did Paul say, ‘*We have peace*’ or ‘*let us have peace*’? The difference amounts to one letter in the Greek. Scholars are split on this, but the big point is that neither variant is a contradiction of the teachings of Scripture.

“Another famous example is First John 1:4. The verse says either, ‘Thus we are writing these things so that *our* joy may be complete,’ or, ‘Thus we are writing these things so that *your* joy may be complete.’ There’s ancient testimony for both readings. So, yes, the meaning is affected, but no foundational beliefs are in jeopardy. Either way, the obvious meaning of the verse is that the writing of this letter brings joy.”

I noted that one point Ehrman emphasized is that some scribes intentionally altered the text.⁷ “Well, he’s absolutely correct,” Wallace said. “Sometimes scribes did intentionally change the text.”

“What’s the most common reason?” I asked.

“They wanted to make the text more explicit. Through the centuries, for example, the church started using sections of Scripture for daily readings. These are called lectionaries. About 2,200 of our Greek manuscripts are lectionaries, where they will set forth a year’s worth of daily or weekly scripture readings.

“Here’s what happened: in the Gospel of Mark, there are 89 verses in a row where the name of Jesus isn’t mentioned once. Just pronouns are used, with ‘he,’ referring to Jesus. Well, if you excerpt a passage for a

daily lectionary reading, you can't start with: 'When he was going someplace....' The reader wouldn't know whom you were referring to. So it was logical for the scribe to replace 'he' with 'Jesus' in order to be more specific in the lectionary. But it's counted as a variant every single time.

"Now, I don't want to give the impression that the scribes didn't ever change the text for theological reasons. They did, and almost always such changes were in the direction of making the New Testament look more orthodox. Probably the most common are harmonizations among the Gospels. The further we get from the original text, the more the copyists harmonized so as to rid the text of any apparent discrepancies. But such harmonizations are fairly easy to detect."

I interrupted. "Exactly how many Christian doctrines are jeopardized by textual variants in the New Testament?" I asked.

"Ehrman didn't prove that *any* doctrine is jeopardized," he replied. "Let me repeat the basic thesis that has been argued since 1707: *No cardinal or essential doctrine is altered by any textual variant that has plausibility of going back to the original.* The evidence for that has not changed to this day."

"What comes the closest?"

"Mark 9:29 could impact orthopraxy, which is right practice, but not orthodoxy, which is right belief. Here Jesus says you can't cast out a certain kind of demon except by prayer — and some manuscripts add, 'and fasting.' So if 'and fasting' is part of what Jesus said, then here's a textual variant that affects orthopraxy. But...does my salvation depend on that?"

I then asked, "Are there any ways in which our understanding of Jesus is significantly altered by textual variants?" Ehrman contends that in Mark 1:41, the Gospel incorrectly says Jesus was "moved with compassion" when He healed a leper; actually, said Ehrman, the original text said that Jesus became angry.⁸

"I think Ehrman is probably correct about the text," Wallace said.

"Although he doesn't come out and say it, Ehrman seems to make an implicit argument that if Jesus was angry, He can't be God, because God is love," I observed.

That triggered a strong response from Wallace. "Wait a minute — there were only two groups in the ancient world — the Stoics and the one branch of the Pharisees — who felt that anger was always wrong. Everybody else felt that righteous indignation had a place in life — and Jesus was one of them."

"Do you think this change in Mark 1:41 alters our picture of Jesus?"

"It changes how we interpret this one particular verse," he said, "but that doesn't mean we suddenly have a different Jesus."

"Why not?"

"Later in the same Gospel, Mark 3:5 says Jesus responded in anger because He was distressed at the stubborn hearts of the religious leaders who were looking for an excuse to accuse Him. In Mark 10:13–16, He gets indignant toward His disciples because they were blocking people from bringing their little children to be blessed by Him. Did Jesus express anger and indignation at times? Yes, we've already known that, but this was certainly appropriate on His part."

"But why," I asked, "would He have been angry when He healed the leper?"

"We can hypothesize several reasons. Ehrman summarily dismisses some possibilities out of hand — for instance, that Jesus was angry at the state of the world that's full of disease, or that He loves the sick but hates the sickness. But the text is ambiguous, so we don't really know. What we *do* know is that Ehrman fails to back up his claim that Jesus gets angry when anyone questions His authority, ability, or desire to heal. That's simply unsupported unless you twist the text."

Wallace was right: Ehrman has simply overstated his case. We can have confidence that none of the inadvertent—or intentional—changes in the text by scribes through the centuries jeopardizes any essential doctrine or teaching about Jesus.

IS THE NEW TESTAMENT JESUS HISTORIC?

A second widely circulated challenge stems from a wave of recent books claiming that Christianity's key tenets about Jesus—especially His resurrection—are not historical, but rather were plagiarized from earlier “mystery” religions that flourished in the Mediterranean world.

“Each mystery religion taught its own version of the myth of the dying and resurrecting Godman, who was known by different names in different places,” said Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy in their book *The Laughing Jesus: Religious Lies and Gnostic Wisdom*. “In Egypt, where the mysteries began, he was Osiris. In Greece he becomes Dionysus, in Asia Minor he is known as Attis, in Syria he is Adonis, in Persia he is Mithras, in Alexandria he is Serapis, to name a few.”⁹

At first blush, the parallels appear striking. For instance, writers have said that the pre-Christian god Mithras was born of a virgin in a cave on December 25, was considered a great traveling teacher, had twelve disciples, promised his followers immortality, sacrificed himself for world peace, was buried in a tomb and rose again three days later, instituted a Eucharist or “Lord’s Supper,” and was considered the Logos, redeemer, Messiah, and “the way, the truth, and the life.”¹⁰

Ancient Myths and Historical Facts

But are these charges accurate? To get answers, I arranged to interview Michael Licona, coauthor of the award-winning book *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*.

“Why,” I asked, “should the story of Jesus’ resurrection have any more credibility than pagan stories of dying and rising gods—such as Osiris, Adonis, Attis, and Marduk—that are so obviously mythological?”

“First of all, it’s important to understand that these claims don’t in any way negate the good historical evidence we have for Jesus’ resurrection,” he pointed out.

“Second, T. N. D. Mettinger—a senior Swedish scholar, professor at Lund University, and member of the Royal Academy of Letters, History, and Antiquities of Stockholm, who wrote an academic treatment of dying and rising gods in antiquity—admits in his book *The Riddle of Resurrection*, that the *nearly universal* consensus among modern scholars is that there were no dying and rising gods that preceded Christianity. They all post-dated the first century.”

That timing is absolutely crucial: Christianity couldn’t have borrowed the idea of the resurrection if myths about dying and rising gods weren’t even circulating when Christianity was birthed in the first century AD.

“Then Mettinger said he was going to take exception to that nearly universal scholarly conviction,” Licona continued. “He takes a decidedly minority position and claims that there are at least three and possibly as many as five dying and rising gods that predate Christianity. But the key question is this: are there any actual parallels between these myths and Jesus’ resurrection?”

“What did Mettinger conclude?” I asked.

“In the end, after combing through all of these accounts and critically analyzing them, Mettinger adds that none of these serve as parallels to Jesus. *None* of them,” Licona emphasized.

“They are far different from the reports of Jesus rising from the dead. They occurred in the unspecified and distant past and were usually related to the seasonal life-and-death cycle of vegetation. In contrast, Jesus’ resurrection isn’t repeated, isn’t related to changes in the seasons, and was sincerely believed to be an actual event by those who lived in the same generation of the historical Jesus. In addition, Mettinger

concludes that 'there is no evidence for the death of the dying and rising gods as vicarious suffering for sins.'"¹¹

I later obtained Mettinger's book. Sure enough, he caps his study with this statement: "There is, as far as I am aware, no *prima facie* evidence that the death and resurrection of Jesus is a mythological construct, drawing on the myths and rites of the dying and rising gods of the surrounding world."¹²

In short, this leading scholar's analysis is a sharp rebuke to popular-level authors who make grand claims about the pagan origins of Jesus' return from the dead. Ultimately, Mettinger affirmed, "the death and resurrection of Jesus retains its unique character in the history of religions."¹³

Mettinger's assessment was extremely significant, but I wanted to dig deeper. "Do I understand correctly that these ancient myths were used to try to explain why things died in the fall and came back in the spring?" I asked.

"Yes, things like that," Licona replied. "When I was a kid, I asked my mom, 'What's thunder?' She said, 'It's angels bowling in heaven.' Obviously, that's just a story. Similarly, in ancient Canaan, a kid would ask his mom, 'Why does the rain stop in the summer?' And his mom would tell him the story of Baal."

"Is this one of the myths that Mettinger thinks predates Christianity?" I asked.

"That's right. In one of the more popular stories, Baal is the storm god in heaven. He's responsible for the rain. His nemesis is Mot, who's in the netherworld. One day Mot and Baal are trash-talking each other. Mot says, 'You think you're so tough, Baal? You leave behind your clouds and lightning bolts and wind and rain and come on down here—I'll show you.' So Baal leaves everything behind and goes to the underworld—where Mot swallows him. How do we know this? It stopped raining!"

"Later, Baal's mother goes down and tells Mot, 'Let my son go!' Mot says, 'No!' So she brutalizes him until he finally says, 'Okay, mercy! Go away and I'll let him go!' She leaves the netherworld and a couple of months later, Baal's dad says, 'Our son's alive.' How does he know? It's raining again!"

"This is like my mom trying to explain thunder to me as a child. They talked about this every year: Baal died and Baal came back. Nobody ever saw it. There were no eyewitnesses. It supposedly occurred in the gray, distant, undated past. It was a fable to explain why there's no rain in the summer—and nothing more. Now, does that sound anything like the resurrection of Jesus? Absolutely not! It's totally different. Jesus' resurrection is supported by strong historical data that is by far best explained by Him returning from the dead."

"How about the other fables that are commonly mentioned?" I asked.

"Attis? This myth is older than Christianity, but the first report we have of a resurrection of Attis comes long after the first century. Adonis is more than a hundred years after Jesus. There's no clear account in antiquity of Marduk even dying—and so a resurrection is even less clear. Some scholars say Tammuz is an account of a dying and rising god—but that's disputed and, besides, it's not a good parallel since there are no reports of an appearance or an empty tomb and this myth was tied to the changing of the seasons."

"What about Osiris?"

"The most popular account says Osiris's brother killed him, chopped him into fourteen pieces, and scattered them around the world. Well, the goddess Isis feels compassion for Osiris, so she looks for his body parts to give him a proper burial. She only finds thirteen of them, puts them back together, and Osiris is buried. But he doesn't come back to this world; he's given the status of god of the netherworld—a gloomy, shadowy place of semiconsciousness. As a friend of mine says, 'This isn't a resurrection, it's a zombification!' This is no parallel to Jesus' resurrection, for which there is strong historical support."

I later interviewed Edwin M. Yamauchi, now-retired ancient history professor at Miami University of Ohio and an expert on Mithraism, the "mystery" religion that some charge was the source of many Christian beliefs about Jesus.

“Mithraism was a late Roman mystery religion that was popular among soldiers and merchants, and which became a chief rival to Christianity in the second century and later,” Yamauchi explained. “The participants met in a cave-like structure called a *mithraeum*, which had as its cult statue Mithras stabbing a bull, the so-called *tauroctony*.”

“Much of what has been circulated on Mithraism has been based on the theories of a Belgian scholar named Franz Cumont. He published his famous work, *Mysteries of Mithras*, in 1903; however, much of what Cumont suggested turned out to be quite unfounded. In the 1970s, scholars at the Second Mithraic Congress in Teheran...concluded that Cumont’s theory was not supported by the evidence, and, in fact, Cumont’s interpretations have now been analyzed and rejected on all major points.”¹⁴

“Contrary to what Cumont believed, even though Mithras was a Persian god who was attested as early as the fourteenth century BC, we have almost no evidence of Mithraism in the sense of a mystery religion in the West until very late—too late to have influenced the beginnings of Christianity....Most of what we have as evidence of Mithraism comes in the second, third, and fourth centuries AD.”

Yamauchi gave me copies of academic articles and books by highly regarded scholars who back up this claim. Gary Lease, professor of religious studies at the University of California at Santa Cruz, noted that such scholars as Adolf von Harnack, Arthur Darby Nock, S. G. F. Brandon, William R. Halliday, and Ernst Benz “have seen little evidence to support claims of such influence and mutual borrowing” between Mithraism and Christianity.¹⁵

Concluded Lease: “After almost one hundred years of unremitting labor, the conclusion appears inescapable that neither Mithraism nor Christianity proved to be an obvious and direct influence upon the other in the development and demise or survival of either religion.”

What about the supposed parallels between Mithraism and Christianity? “First, popular writers claim that Mithras was born of a virgin,” I said to Yamauchi. “Is that true that this was what Mithraism taught?”

“No, that’s definitely *not* true,” he insisted. “He was born out of a rock.”

“A rock?”

“Yes, the rock birth is commonly depicted in Mithraic reliefs,” he explained. “Mithras emerges fully grown and naked except for a Phrygian cap, and he’s holding a dagger and torch. In some variations, flames shoot out from the rock, or he’s holding a globe in his hand.”

“And that means he wasn’t born in a cave, which some writers claim is a second parallel to Christianity,” I commented.

Yamauchi said it was true that Mithraic sanctuaries were designed to look like caves. On the other hand, nowhere in the New Testament is Jesus described as having been born in a cave. This idea is first mentioned in the letter of Barnabas at the beginning of the second century. Lease pointed out that scholar Ernst Benz “has shown conclusively that this Christian tradition does not come from a dependency on Mithraism, but rather from an ages old tradition in Palestine itself of holy shrines in caves.”¹⁶

I said to Yamauchi, “The third supposed parallel with Jesus is that Mithras was born on December 25.”

“Again, that’s not a parallel,” he replied.

“Why not?”

“Because we don’t know the date Jesus was born,” he said.

“What about the fourth parallel that Mithras was a great traveler or master with 12 disciples?”

“No—he was a god, not a teacher,” Yamauchi replied.

“The fifth parallel is that his followers were promised immortality.”

“Well, that can be inferred, but certainly that was the hope of most followers of any religion,” he said. “So that’s not surprising.”

“How about the sixth claim, which says that Mithras sacrificed himself for world peace?”

“That’s reading Christian theology into what’s not there,” Yamauchi replied. “He didn’t sacrifice himself—he (merely) killed a bull.”

“The seventh parallel is that Mithras was buried in a tomb and rose after three days,” I said.

“We don’t know anything about the death of Mithras,” Yamauchi said. “We have a lot of monuments, but we have almost no textual evidence, because this was a secret religion. But I know of no references to a supposed death and resurrection.”

Indeed, British scholar Richard Gordon declared in his book *Image and Value in the Greco-Roman World* that there is “no death of Mithras”—and thus, there cannot be a resurrection.¹⁷

“Eighth,” I said, “Mithras was considered the Good Shepherd, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, the Logos, the Redeemer, the Savior.”

“No, again, that’s reading Christian theology into this,” Yamauchi answered.

“Ninth, there was a sacramental meal in Mithraism that paralleled the Lord’s Supper.”

“Common meals are found in almost all religious communities,” Yamauchi replied. “Clearly, the Christian meal was based on the Passover, not on a mystery religion.”

One last supposed parallel remained: whether a gory Mithraic ritual was the source for the apostle Paul’s teaching of redemption through the blood of Jesus.

I asked Yamauchi to describe the ritual. “In its developed form, the initiate was placed in a pit and a bull was slaughtered on a grate above him, drenching him in the bull’s blood,” he said.

This seemed totally alien to the practices of the Jewish sacrificial system and its foreshadowing of Jesus’ death as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”¹⁸

“Again,” continued Yamauchi, “the dating of practices like this are the Achilles’ heel of these comparative studies—they don’t pay attention to the dates of the sources and they’re used anachronistically.”

“This rite is reported in the second century AD,” he added. “So there’s no way this rite could have influenced Christianity’s theology about redemption.”

Like Ehrman’s allegations about the New Testament text, the grandiose claims that Christianity fashioned itself after Mithraism had been convincingly swept away by solid scholarship. Over and over again, the pattern remained the same: as I investigated the current challenges to the traditional picture of Jesus, I consistently walked away even more convinced that the church’s historic portrait of Him is well supported by the evidence.

NOTES

1. This article is adapted from *The Case for the Real Jesus: A Journalist Investigates Current Attacks on the Identity of Christ* by Lee Strobel. Copyright © 2007 by Lee Strobel. Used by permission of Zondervan.
2. Personal e-mail to author.
3. Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998).
4. Bart D. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), 89.

5. Ibid., 7.
6. Ibid., 208.
7. Ibid., 151–75.
8. Ibid., 133–39.
9. Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy, *The Laughing Jesus* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2005), 55–56.
10. See: J. P. Holding, “Mighty Mithraic Madness: Did the Mithraic Mysteries Influence Christianity?” *Texts Outside the Bible, Confronting the Copycat Thesis*, Tekton Apologetics Ministries, <http://www.tektonics.org/copycat/mithra.html>. This article addresses alleged parallels described in Acharya S, *The Christ Conspiracy: The Greatest Story Ever Sold* (Kempton, IL: Adventures Unlimited Press, 1999), 118–20. Several similar parallels are found in Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 232.
11. Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *The Riddle of Resurrection: “Dying and Rising Gods” in the Ancient Near East* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wicksell, 2001), 221.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. See: Richard Gordon, “Franz Cumont and the Doctrines of Mithraism,” *Mithraic Studies* 1:236 (1975).
15. Gary Lease, “Mithraism and Christianity: Borrowings and Transformations,” in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, vol. 2, ed. Wolfgang Haase (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 1316.
16. Ibid.,” 1321–22.
17. Richard Gordon, *Image and Value in the Greco-Roman World* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996), 96, quoted in Holding.
18. See John 1:29.