

DCP: Among the highlights of Hutchinson's discussion are these:

RJH: Among the recent developments discussed in this book are:

DCP: The 2012 announcement of seven previously unknown New Testament papyri — one of which, a text from the gospel of Mark, may date to the first century of the Christian era — seems to contradict suppositions that the biblical accounts were created long after the death of Jesus. And these manuscripts are presumably copies of even earlier writings.

RJH: the 2012 announcement of the discovery of seven previously unknown New Testament papyri--one of which, from the Gospel of Mark, that may date to the first century;

DCP: One young secular scholar in Britain now argues that Mark's account, usually reckoned to be the earliest of the four canonical gospels, wasn't written half a century after Jesus but, rather, within perhaps five or 10 years of his crucifixion.

RJH: a young secular scholar in the UK who recently argued that the Gospel of Mark was written not forty or fifty years after Jesus' death, as many scholars have claimed for at least a century, but more like five or ten;

DCP: For a long time, it's been assumed that the New Testament gospels rest on anonymous and doctrinally prejudiced reports that had circulated for decades prior to being written down in their ultimate form, and that, as folklore and rumor typically do, they had grown considerably in the telling. However, excellent recent scholarship argues that, on the contrary, the gospels are based on eyewitness testimony from identifiable, named individuals.

RJH: a top New Testament scholar in the UK who insists that the gospel accounts are based on eyewitness testimony tied to named individuals, not based on anonymous reports that circulated over decades as scholars once thought;

DCP: For decades, many scholars have contended that ancient Christian leaders suppressed early Gnostic "gospels" in favor of the theologically biased and less women-friendly narratives of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Some have claimed that such documents provide an earlier and more accurate view of Jesus than the canonized documents do. Increasingly, though, scholarship recognizes that the Gnostic texts aren't earlier — they were actually written between one and three centuries after Jesus — and that they're sometimes extremely misogynistic.

RJH: the growing recognition that the Gnostic gospels the Christian church allegedly suppressed were actually written one hundred to three hundred years after Jesus, and are in some cases openly misogynistic.

DCP: One of the arguments commonly made against the reality of Jesus is that Nazareth itself, his supposed hometown, didn't even exist in the first century. The Old Testament and the ancient historian Josephus never mention it, and there were no archaeological traces of it. As one writer quipped, we know that Jesus isn't real just as we know that the Wizard of Oz isn't real because both Nazareth and the Land of Oz are fictional. In 2008, one such skeptic even published a book titled "The Myth of Nazareth: The Invented Town of Jesus." Unfortunately for his thesis, it was just a year later that archaeologists discovered the remains of a first-century stone house only a few steps from Nazareth's beautiful Basilica of the Annunciation — a house that, its excavator suggests, might even be the very house in which Jesus grew up. (See my [previous column](#) titled "Archaeology and the boyhood of Jesus in Nazareth.")

RJH: the 2009 discovery of a first-century stone house in Nazareth that refutes one of the key arguments used by those who say Jesus never existed;

DCP: Tangible archaeological proof of the existence of key New Testament figures such as the Roman prefect Pontius Pilate, the high priest Caiaphas, and perhaps even James, the half-brother of Jesus, has now been found.

RJH: recent excavations in Israel that have uncovered archaeological proof of the existence of key figures mentioned in the New Testament, including the high priest Caiaphas and possibly James the Just;

DCP: Some scholars have long suggested that first-century Jews were expecting a militant messiah who would liberate them from Roman oppression, which is probably true for most, but also that the idea of Jesus as a suffering and dying Savior was invented in order to excuse his obvious failure to expel the Romans. Now, though, a Hebrew-language tablet dating to the early first century has been found that seems to speak not only of a suffering and dying messiah but even, possibly, of an expectation that he would rise from the dead after three days.

RJH: the recently discovered Hebrew-language tablet dating back to the early first century that speaks about a messiah who would suffer, die, and perhaps rise again in three days;

DCP: During the 20th century, many scholars maintained that belief in Jesus as a divine savior arose 50 or even 100 years after his death. Newer research, though, contends that it emerged very early, within *perhaps* a year or two of his crucifixion.

RJH: new research that suggests belief in Jesus as a divine savior arose very early, within a year or two of the Crucifixion, not fifty to one hundred years as academic researchers used to claim in the twentieth century;

~~Jewish experts who insist that the gospels show Jesus was not an "illiterate peasant," as some historians and popular writers have claimed, but was likely a highly trained and knowledgeable rabbi;~~

~~leading New Testament researchers who challenge the notion that Jesus was a "zealot" who sympathized with efforts to overthrow Roman rule;~~