



# Jesus, the Man and the Myth: A Jewish Reading of the New Testament

*Haim Ben-Asher*

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King of Israel? Poor Jesus. Had he remained in Nazareth working in Joseph's carpentry shop, he would have been offered a share of the business. He could have settled down, married a nice Jewish girl and enjoyed a happy home life with his wife and children. He would not have gone to Jerusalem, and he would not have been crucified by the Romans. Instead, he got carried away by his success as a faith healer and imagined himself to be the King of Israel. The Pharisees had serious doubts regarding his candidacy to the throne of David. Miracles in themselves prove nothing; multiplying loaves of bread and walking on water did not bring the kingdom of heaven any nearer. So they warned Jesus not to go to Jerusalem. But he disregarded their advice and undertook to make the long journey on foot, performing miracle cures along the way. Jesus received a rapturous welcome on his arrival, as the people lining his route shouted, "Hosanna to the son of David" Five days later, he was dead. What happened in the interval, and why did his popular following vanish almost completely? For one thing, his fellow Jews reasoned that anyone who recommends paying taxes to Rome cannot possibly be their liberator. But there were other, more profound reasons for this disaffection. Much of Jesus' teaching runs counter to Judaism and its approach to life. Loving one's enemies and hating one's parents simply will not do. The present essay offers an explanation of the Jewish world-view so as to disentangle fact from fiction in the New Testament.

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