

## **Bill Maher's major contention about Christianity:**

**The New Testament stories are made up, fictional, and furthermore, they are not original. There were stories going around the Mediterranean area for at least 1000 years that contain parallels or accounts almost identical with the New Testament accounts of Jesus. In the scenes of the DVD movie, *Religulous*, of the visit to the "Holy Land Experience" in Orlando, Florida, Bill Maher presents three examples to support his contention:**

1. Krishna (1000 B.C.) – This god from the Far East was a carpenter, born of a virgin mother, and was baptized in the river. When the Jesus actor asks if this history is actual and was written down, Bill Maher states, "absolutely." Bill then leads into his second example.
2. Mithra (600 B. C.) – This mythological god was born on December 25, performed miracles or had miracles associated with him, was resurrected on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day from the dead, was referred to as the Lamb, Way, Truth, Light, Savior, and Messiah. Mithra is one of numerous mythological gods born on Dec. 25.
3. Horus (1280 B.C.) – This god is found in the Egyptian Book of the Dead dated at 1280 B.C. The movie lists the following similarities to the Jesus story in this order: son of god Osiris; born of a virgin mother; baptized in the river by Anup the Baptizer; Anup the Baptizer was later beheaded; Horus went into the desert by himself and was tempted; Horus healed the sick, the blind, and drove out demons; walked on water; resurrected Asar from the dead (The Egyptian name "Asar" translates to the Greek "Lazarus."); Horus had 12 disciples; Horus was crucified and died, two women reported after 3 days that Horus was resurrected from the dead and is the Savior of Humanity.

## **Research at the Iliff Theological Seminary library:**

**From April – June, 2009 research on the above three supportive examples was done to investigate the veracity of the claims made by Bill Maher in the movie, *Religulous*. This research project was done primarily because the examples by Bill Maher are quite significant, if true, as supporting evidences for his position that the Gospels and the life of Jesus are just myth. On the other hand, if the examples are not accurate as to what actually exists and what can be understood from the documents or artifacts, then the movie is pretty much shown to be a fraud in its portrayals and claims, and by logical extension, its thesis that Christianity is a myth-based religion is not tenable by the evidence.**

**The reports of the research are as follows:**

1. Krishna (1000 B.C.) – The Hindu mythology of Krishna is found in four principal documents, namely, *Chandogya-Upanishad*, *Mahabharata*, *Bhagavad-gita*, and *Bhagavata-Purana*. The approximate dates for these documents are respectively 500 B.C., 100 A.D., 200 A.D., and 900 A.D. In looking at the list of the 10 avatars for Vishnu, and knowing that Buddha was around 500 B.C., this puts Krishna around 550 – 650 B.C., I think, and not 1000 B.C. In the very early *Rigveda* (1000 B.C. or so) the name Krishna does appear but there is no reference to the divinity of Krishna. The next step in the research was to read the English translations of the four mentioned documents. In doing so, the first mention of the divinity of Krishna is in the *Chandogya-Upanishad*; the *Bhagavata-Purana* (also called the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* or *Bhagavata*) contains most of the details of the Lord Krishna's life. In it he is born in a fanciful way with four arms from a virgin, erects the Devaraka Fort (Does this make him a carpenter?), and takes a bath within the Yamuna River (Does this constitute a 'baptism'?) The source document for these stories dates from A.D. 900.

2. Mithra (600 B.C.) – The earliest mention of Mithra is in the *Rigveda*. Mithra progresses from India to Persia to Babylon to Asia Minor to the Roman World. He does this over a period of about 1400 years or so. Mithraism was a competitor to Christianity in the Roman World up until around 285 A.D. Christian art did imitate Mithraic art forms in some cases. There were charges both ways as to who copied whom in the similarities that Bill Maher claims, but unfortunately, Mithraism has very little writing to actually explain the religion, and the one document that is claimed to represent it, *The "Mithras Liturgy"*, is somewhat in dispute as to how much it reliably represents the religion of Mithra as a whole. It may only represent a local sect or cult. Mithra is referred to as "The Secret God" because much is not known about him. Only a few of the similarities with Jesus Christ that Maher lists have been confirmed. Much of what is known or conjectured about Mithra comes from looking at the works of art. Some have interpreted the works to symbolize a Light, a bearer of Truth, a Saviour, and a Mediator (Messiah). Others have questioned the validity of these interpretations.

3. Horus (1280 B. C.) – This Egyptian God is listed with the most similarities with the Gospel accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus, and the document referred to is the "Book of the Dead." I read the English translation of this document from cover to cover and did not find any of the similar events between Jesus and Horus that Bill Maher reported: Anup the Baptizer, beheading, crucifixion, resurrection after three days, etc. – none of this is in the *Book of the Dead*. Other Egyptian works were read, as well, the *Pyramid Texts*, the *Coffin Texts*, *Miscellaneous writings of the Egyptians*, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of Two Ways*, and some others were read for the reported similarities. None have been found so far except that Horus is reported to have raised Osiris from the dead, and another name for Osiris is Asar, and Asar is a version of the name Lazarus. This much was found. Horus is reported to have been born of natural means from Osiris and Isis, and Osiris is an important Egyptian mythological god, and Horus was called the "son of god," and inherited Osiris' position as the god after he had raised Osiris from the dead from assembled body parts. So there are some similarities if one wants to stretch it, but most, however, of what Bill Maher reported to exist have not been found in any of the books about Egyptian religion or in any the ancient documents that have been read. (The accounts by the Greek Diodorus in 60 B.C. are not considered to be accurate or reliable. He seems to have confused Osiris for Horus when he described Horus as being killed and resurrected.)

## **AN ANALYSIS OF THE CLAIMS:**

**Overall the claims were shown to be unsubstantiated by the evidence. Krishna was not mentioned as a god in 1000 B.C., and any accounts that are quoted to support the claims by Maher are from a document dating close to A.D. 1000. Mithra has no written sources extant that expound his life or teachings. The so-called "Mithras Liturgy" is rejected by most scholars as unauthentic. The interpretation of the art is speculative. Horus has no ancient Egyptian records of the 12 details shown by the DVD, except that Horus was a god and his father Osiris (Asar) a god. Horus resurrected the assembled pieces of Osiris' body back to life. The Greek historian Diodorus in 60 B.C. reported that Horus was killed and resurrected - this confuses Horus and Osiris. The account by which two women tell of the resurrection of Horus after 3 days has no support in ancient Egyptian literature and is most likely spurious.**

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