

Just Thinking Apologetics #8

Who was Jesus? A somewhat popular theory today is that Jesus was a mystic or Eastern guru. This view has especially gained momentum with the New Age movement, which is grounded in Eastern philosophies. According to those holding this view Jesus learned the Eastern way of life between the ages of 12 and 30. Because we have no record of Jesus life during this time, some believe that Jesus picked up Eastern thinking by traveling East during this unrecorded time in his life.

There are three good reasons to doubt the explanation of Jesus as a mystic. First, Jesus was recognized when he began his public ministry and it is probable that his early life was spent in Nazareth (Matt. 13:55-56, Luke 2:51-52). Secondly, Jesus grew up as an orthodox Jew, which stands in direct opposition to any Eastern ideas (Ex. 20:3, Deut 4:35), such as polytheism (belief in many gods). Also, Eastern philosophy stresses enlightenment, which contradicts the Bible's idea of divine redemption (Ps. 19:14, Isa. 44:6). Thirdly, those who promote the New Age religion read Eastern meaning into the Scriptures and misrepresent the message of Jesus.

The explanation of Jesus as a mystic simply fails to meet the criteria of the historical Jesus as described in the Bible. A specialist in the New Age movement, Ron Rhodes notes, "The historical, hard evidence for the Jesus-goes-East account is virtually non-existent." The hypothesis of Jesus as an Eastern mystic simply does not hold water.