

## The Gospels were not written by eyewitnesses.

Whether one believes that the canonical gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke & John) are partly fictional elaborations of some core of truth, or whether you believe they are entirely fictional is not the issue at this point. (What I see as a separate issue of their fictional or non-fictional status will be taken up in the next point.) The question here is simply, were the gospels written by human witnesses to the “life and times” of the putative Jesus? This point can be handled quite briefly. The answer is a resounding “No!” There is virtual unanimity of opinion by all un-brainwashed, rational biblical scholars—even so-called Christian scholars (perhaps an oxymoron)—that the gospels were written by now unknown writers anytime between 40 years after Jesus’ time up to about 185 years after his supposed death, depending on what scholar one consults. Most scholars place Mark, the generally recognized first written gospel, at about the year 70 CE, just after the destruction of the Jewish temple of Yahweh. However, Earl Doherty has advanced some closely reasoned arguments that support a time “around the years 85 to 90 CE.” (The Jesus Puzzle, p. 3).

Famed Jesus scholar, Dr. G. A Wells summarizes in his 1988 book, *The Historical Evidence for Jesus*, “The gospels are usually put between 70 and 110, with Mark at about 70, Matthew and Luke a little later, and John, the latest, at about 100. Acts (written as we shall see, by the author of Luke) and some of the pseudo-Pauline epistles are assigned to the turn of the century. I find all this convincing enough, except in the case of Mark, which I date at about 90 rather than 70. If this is correct, then all four gospels were written soon after 90 and drew some of their material from earlier documents which have not survived and from oral tradition, much of which must have been available from about 80, although it would have taken time for them to have become generally disseminated.” (Wells, op. cit. p. 10 & 11).

There is near unanimous agreement that the very first mention of the existence of what we now call the gospels was by Justin Martyr, in the 150s. Doherty says, however, that he may only have known of Matthew and Luke. “Even at that, he does not refer to them by name, calling the documents he is quoting from ‘memoirs of the Apostles.’ Moreover, his quotations for the most part do not agree with our present texts.” (The Jesus Puzzle, p. 259) So, it seems that the “eyewitness testimony” of the so-called “apostles” was still being sort of “worked out” a century and a half after J.C.’s supposed birth.