

JESUS CHRIST

THE SUN OF GOD?

People in the ancient world worshipped the sun as a god. The ancients personified the sun in several different forms, often making it the supreme deity in their respective religions. It exercised power over darkness and gave life to the Earth. Whether in Egypt or Mesopotamia, the sun god was among the most powerful and influential deities worshipped by ancient man. According to a new documentary, this includes Christianity.

A recent production entitled *Zeitgeist, the Movie* is making its way across the Internet. According to the official website of the movie, producer Peter Joseph created the work to get people to take a more critical look at the world around them. The movie examines topics ranging from the terrorist attacks that took place on 9/11 to conspiracy theories involving the American government. The most important part for Christians is the first thirty-five minutes.

In those minutes, Johnson fires both barrels at the American people's predominant faith. Claiming to have spent a year of intense research for the production, Johnson concludes that the Christian faith is little more than an updated version of ancient pagan beliefs. He argues that Jesus is merely a Christianized version of the Egyptian



sun god Horus, a fact supposedly evident from dozens of parallels between the two. Like others before him, Johnson asserts that Jesus is simply a rip-off from other religions: another rendition of the crucified salvation figure as stale as yesterday's news.

According to the movie, the biblical portrait of Christ shares unmistakable similarities to Horus, so close that Christians must have borrowed their concept of Jesus from the Egyptians. The parallels supposedly show that Horus was born on December 25, had a virgin mother, was a child prodigy as a teacher, was baptized and began his min-

istry at age 30, had twelve disciples, was crucified, and was resurrected after spending three days in the grave. Quite a likeness it seems, until one realizes that these supposed parallels are fabrications by an English poet from the 1800's.

The enthusiastic Englishman Gerald Massey is responsible for much of the research behind *Zeitgeist* (meaning "spirit of the age"). Originally a poet, Massey became interested in Egyptology and taught himself how to read hieroglyphs. He found dozens if not hundreds of parallels between Christianity and Egyptian mythology that resonate with earlier generations of biblical "scholars" who taught that concepts from both the Old and New Testaments were borrowed wholesale from other religions. In this view, the Hebrews borrowed stories from their neighbors in Mesopotamia, while early Christians stole their ideas from Greek philosophers. This approach has been largely abandoned in serious scholarship today, but critics operating on the popular level still reference outdated research. *Zeitgeist, the Movie* is certainly no exception.

Some Christians feel that movies like *Zeitgeist* will serve as evangelical tools. They think the film will open up unbelievers to the possibility of considering the divine. The same thing happened when Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* hit bookstore shelves in 2005. Some felt that if the Bible were being addressed by popular culture, it would be a jumping-off point for a discussion of the truth about Christianity. Ultimately, one must question the idealistic rationale behind such a statement, especially in light of the evidence. One poll in Canada showed that one third of the people polled who had read *The Da Vinci Code* believed that Jesus married Mary Magdalene. *Zeitgeist* does not just present itself as a work of fiction but actually defends itself as an informed critique of early Christian beliefs about Jesus.

Even after two thousand years, the critics are still attacking Jesus and those who follow Him. The fact that Christians are confronted with books, films, and documentaries criticizing the Christian faith is neither new nor unexpected. In John's Gospel, Jesus addresses this problem:

If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you (John 15:18-19, ESV).

Zeitgeist, the Movie—if it is even remembered a decade from now—will ultimately go down in history as another failed attempt to discredit the Christian faith. ▲