

Theologian Blasts 'Zealot Jesus' for Suggesting 'Jesus Is Historically Unknowable'

In his new book *Zealot: The Real Jesus*, Reza Aslan merely repeats bygone claims about the historical Jesus that have since been abandoned and refuted, says William Lane Craig, Christian philosopher, theologian and founder of [The Reason Project](#), a Web-based ministry that provides, in the public arena, an intelligent and articulate perspective about the existence of God.

"Aslan has offered nothing new under the sun when it comes to offering a critique of the historical Jesus," says Craig. "In fact, he is attempting to revert scholarship back to the early 1900s by echoing Albert Schweitzer's book, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*. Like Schweitzer, Aslan claims that Jesus is historically unknowable and we can never get back to the real Jesus.

"Additionally," Craig notes, "Aslan makes an illicit, anachronistic allusion to Jesus and the Zealot party of the Jewish people. During Jesus' lifetime, the designation of *zealot* merely referred to a person who was politically a nationalist and 'zealous' for Jewish independence. According to many scholars, it would be stretching it to claim that Jesus, or any of the zealots of Jesus' time, were members of the official Zealot nationalist party, which wasn't organized until A.D. 67/68."

Craig concludes, "The reasons Aslan presents for Jesus' crucifixion are lacking in religio-historical accuracy. There were certainly political reasons that involved Rome and Pilate. Pilate's action to offer one criminal for another [accused criminal] was not unprecedented. Pilate's motivation seems to have been more political rather than sympathetic to

Jesus. Pilate was only trying to appease the crowds for he had already dealt with rebellious Jews in the beginning of his governorship.

“In light of the context of political and social tensions, the historical background information sheds light on why Pilate even cared about the situation. Pilate could have done radical actions at the wave of a hand such as not even listen to the Jews about Jesus, or he could have listened and immediately sentenced Him to death. Trying to offer appeasement to the Jews [in light of what seems to be a sympathetic approach to Jesus, but not wholeheartedly], he gives them an option to release a prisoner of Rome *back* to the Jews. Hoping that this may dilute or solve the situation, the Jews chose Barabbas. Ignoring the Jewish religious context and the Sanhedrin’s justifications for wanting to crucify Jesus doesn’t fit well with Aslan’s claims.”