

Westar Institute

Bringing religious scholarship to public conversation

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Press Release

For Immediate Release

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Can we know which historical Jesus is “correct”?

A comparison of the Jesus Seminar and John Meier’s *Marginal Jew*

Denver, CO (October 29, 2018) – Westar Institute in collaboration with the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) is hosting a free, public lecture on Monday, November 19th, at St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church, 2015 Glenarm Place, Denver. The lecture will be in conjunction with the SBL meetings hosted in Denver this November.

In the presentation, scholar Bernard Brandon Scott will ask how it is possible to end up with two very different views of the historical Jesus. He will compare John Meier’s methods and starting point to those of the Jesus Seminar and offer insights into the outcomes.

The Jesus Seminar, started in the mid-1980’s, brought scholars together in a quest to determine what Jesus really said, and to report these findings to the public.

Meier conducted his own version of the Jesus Seminar. He began with Jesus as an apocalyptic prophet and ended with the parables, which he then had largely to dismiss. In Meier’s view, only a small number of parables turned out to be authentic.

In contrast, the Jesus Seminar started with the parables—a distinctive difference in methodology—and found most of them to be authentic. The Seminar ended with a non-apocalyptic Jesus.

Investigating these differences reveals the influence of methodology, the testing of assumptions, and the judgements of critical historical study.

The lecture is free and open to the public.

Westar Institute, a non-profit, public-benefit research and educational organization that bridges the gap between scholarship about religion and the perception of religion in popular culture. It is not affiliated with any religious institution or denomination and does not advocate a particular theological point of view.

Founded in 1880, the **Society of Biblical Literature** is the oldest and largest learned society devoted to the critical investigation of the Bible from a variety of academic disciplines