

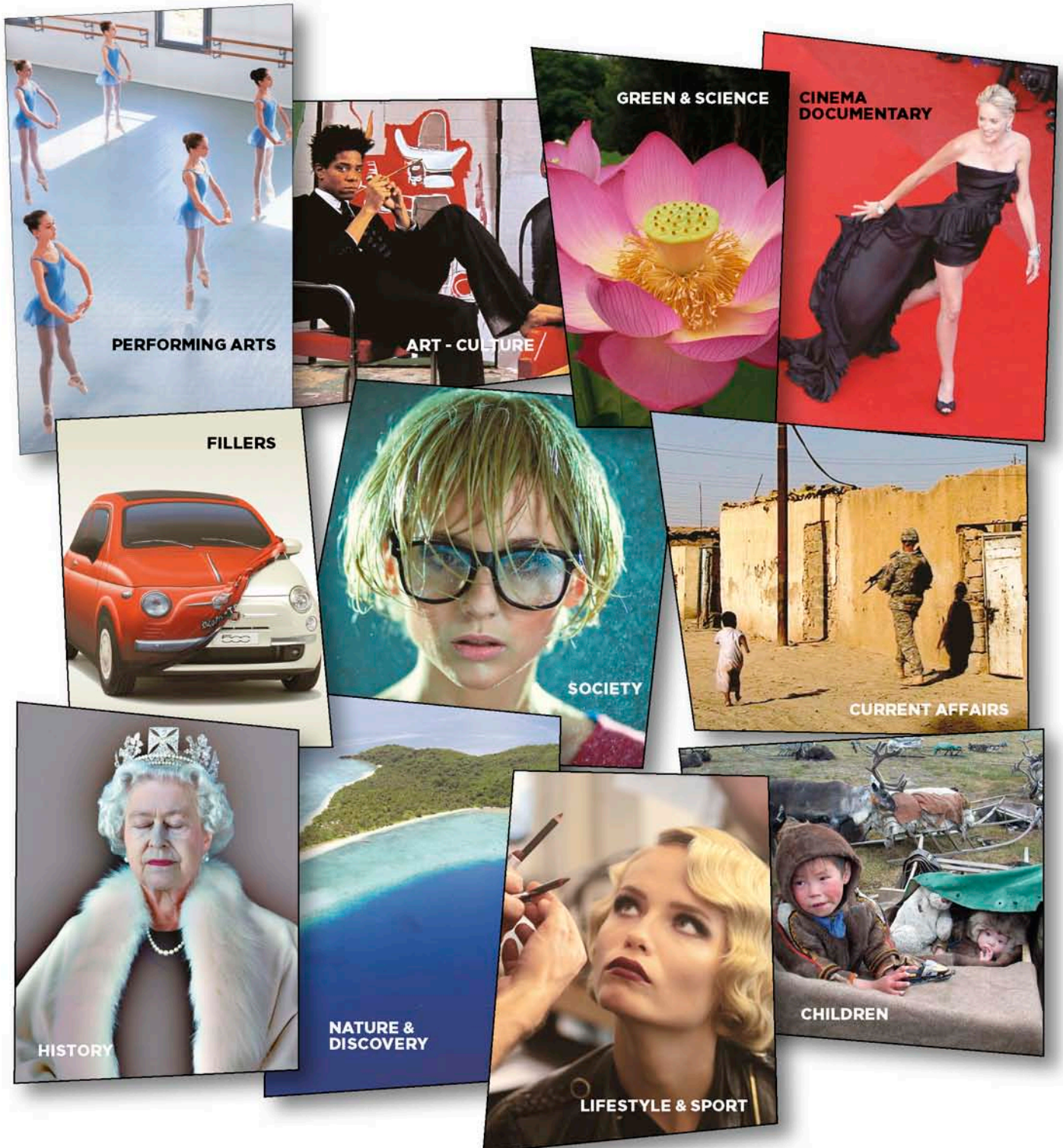
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CORPUS CHRISTI VA

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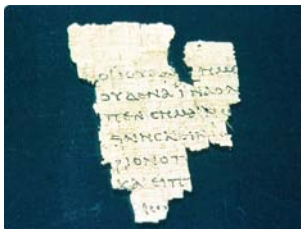
CORPUS CHRISTI

A historical and scientific enquiry into the origins of the New Testament and the life of Jesus Christ involving specialists from all over the world.

Corpus Christi explores the question of Jesus seen historically and through the texts which tell us about his life. Corpus Christi tackles the viewpoints of the most eminent researchers worldwide who are working on the subject. Corpus Christi enables us to understand just how spectacular the distance is between what we know about Jesus - or what we think we know - and what is known by historians, linguists, bible scholars, and epigraphers who are endlessly analyzing and questioning the most fundamental Christian texts. Released on DVD by ARTE Video

AWARDS :

Best Historical Documentary - Nuit Des Clio 1997.



LIST OF EPISODES

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09 - RESURRECTION

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01 - THE CRUCIFIXION

The image of Christ on the cross is known all over the world, but are we even certain how the torture was inflicted?

Were convicts nailed or tied to the cross? What shape was the cross? Where did executions take place? Do the writings by historians of antiquity confirm those of the Evangelists? What can we learn from bone fragments of the sole crucifixion victim ever discovered (in Jerusalem), which are also dated 1st century AD? Who crucified Jesus: the Romans or the Jews, as the Gospel according to Saint John leads us to believe?

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02 - JOHN THE BAPTIST

Where was Jesus from? How can he be situated in the Judaism of his time among the reform movements cropping up around the first century?

In the eyes of many Jews, the Roman presence in Palestine, i.e., the pagan domination of the Holy Land, is essentially a manifestation of the impurity of the chosen people before God. Just as the members of the Qumran sect withdrew into the desert to cleanse themselves of their impurity, John the Baptist offered an immersion ritual far from Jerusalem in substitution for temple sacrifices, rites which were carried out by the High Priests. The beginning of each of the gospels emphasizes the capital role played by the Baptist. Was Jesus one of his disciples? In what way did Jesus' activity further or challenge the Baptist movement? Have Christians appropriated John the Baptist, and turned him into a "precursor" figure after the fact?

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03 - TEMPLE

For Jesus, as for all Jews of his time, the Temple of Jerusalem was the holiest place in Israel: it was there that God manifested his presence.

But the Roman occupation of Palestine forced the High Priests to agree to a trade-off: the Temple would remain a Jewish enclave where they were free to practice their religion, and the rest of the country would fall under imperial authority. Were Judeans and Galileans able to accept this? Who were the High Priests: religious Jews? collaborators? back-up ranks for the governor's police force? Why were the Pharisees and the Sadducees opposed to one other? How did Jesus situate himself in relation to these two religious groups? In the episode in which the merchants were chased from the Temple, did Jesus really or only symbolically aspire to the power of the High Priests? Was there really an "occurrence" or were the events edited to coincide with Biblical prophecies? Did Jesus want to overturn the Temple of Jerusalem?

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04 - THE TRIAL

How, and by whom was Jesus judged? Was Jesus tried once or twice? Was there a Jewish trial and a Roman trial? Are there two different stories of Jesus: one told from the Jewish viewpoint, the other from the Roman viewpoint?

In the Gospel according to Saint John, the Roman prefect Pontius Pilate seems to want to save Jesus from his torture. Can this attitude be reconciled with the fierce portrait of Pilate painted by Jewish historians of the time? Why did the Evangelists try to exonerate Pilate and accuse the Jews? Can this enable us to definitively date when the texts were written? Or to determine what their theological and ideological issues were?

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07 - JUDAS

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The gospels speak of a hateful individual named Judas. Although he was one of the twelve disciples, he betrayed Jesus and led him to his death. Is this betrayal based on historical fact?

Who was Judas: a renegade, an extremist, or an ally? Is he called Iscariot because he came from a village in Judea near Jerusalem? Was Judas presented as the traitor because he was the only Judean among the group of Galileans? Was Jesus supposedly betrayed by all Judea, in the name of Judas? Is he not the quintessential Jew, the embodiment of Judaism after the Christians' break with the Synagogue? How many Judases are there in the gospels? One? Two? Three? Judas, son of Simon, Judas Iscariot, Jude, the brother of Jesus, etc.?

05 - BARABBAS

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Jesus the Nazarene or Jesus of Nazareth: this is how Jesus is referred to in the four gospels. And yet in several other archaic manuscripts we discover another Jesus : Jesus Barabbas.

Barabbas was the rioter chosen by the crowd over Jesus, when Pontius Pilate offered to amnesty one prisoner. Who was Barabbas, whose name in Aramaic can be read "Son of the Father"? Was he one of the witnesses of the Jewish uprisings against the Roman occupation? Was he a Zealot? Was he a literary creation? Does he serve as a marker of the death of the historical Jesus? How can we explain that his full name was gradually erased from the texts that have been passed down to us? On a wider scope, should the gospels be viewed as documents on the life and death of Jesus, or as texts that bear witness to the schism taking place within Judaism after the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem in 70?

06 - KING OF THE JEWS

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The titulus, or act of accusation, placed on the cross was inscribed "Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews"; is this inscription the oldest surviving text which refers to Jesus?

Did "Nazarene" mean someone from Nazareth? How can the fact be explained that there are no archeological traces of Nazareth dating earlier than the 2nd century AD? In spite of the differences among the four Evangelists, they all agree that the inscription on the cross included the words "King of the Jews", in reference to Jesus. Was he executed principally for political reasons? Did Jesus himself have royal pretensions, which would certainly have posed a threat to the Roman imperial government?

08 - PASSOVER

Do we know what day Jesus died? What year? In 30? In 33? Later?

According to the Gospel of Saint John, Jesus died on Passover, whereas in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke,) the crucifixion took place the day before. The stories of the Passion are reputed to be the oldest texts in all the gospels. But how can the blatant differences among them be explained? Why are these stories so heavily infused with allusions to the Old Testament? What was their function? Was it to keep a historical record or to create a new liturgy which could compete with the traditional Jewish liturgy? Could the date of Jesus' death have been chosen for primarily theological reasons, to appropriate Passover and make Jesus into the new Moses?

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09 - RESURRECTION

What happened after Jesus died on the cross? Why were his disciples not in turn persecuted by the Romans? Why did they stay in Jerusalem?

Were they still waiting for the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel? Did they expect it to be imminent, i.e. would the end of time also coincide with the end of Roman rule? Did Jesus himself expect to rise from the dead? To what extent does the Christian concept of the resurrection spring from Jewish tradition? How much credence should one give to the accounts of the discovery of the empty tomb? Why does the earliest Christian writer never mention this scene but only speak of the apparitions of Jesus after he has risen from the dead? Why are these apparitions so different from one text to another, despite the fact that all the texts speak about the women and the disciples seeing Jesus and not recognizing him at first? Can one still speak of "resurrection"? How would the fact that neither the apocalypse nor the Messiah had come, set the stage for the birth of Christianity?

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10 - CHRISTOS

In Christianity, Jesus is Jesus Christ. In the gospels Jesus is called "Christ", the Greek translation of the Hebrew word for "messiah" or "anointed by God". Was the biblical conception of the messiah political or religious?

Was it possible to be a prophet without being king? During his lifetime did Jesus claim to be the messiah of Israel? Was it the royal aspect of this pretension which brought about his condemnation? Why and by whom? By the Jews who thought it was blasphemous and dangerous for their people? Or by the Romans who feared the arrival of a liberating king of Israel? Did Jesus become "Christos", or "Jesus Christ" only after his death? How many years or centuries separate Jesus the Nazarene from Jesus Christ?

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How old are the most ancient papyruses of the gospel according to John ? Why have they all been found in Egypt and none in Palestine ?

Why were there hundreds of variations before the version we know today was settled on ? What is the relationship between the gospel of John with those of Mark, Matthew, and Luke ? Was the former dependent upon the latter, or on an independent source ? One of Jesus' Apostles was called John, son of Zebedee. Did he write the fourth gospel known as "The Gospel According to John" ? Was he the beloved disciple who appears in the text as the author of the gospel ? Is there another figure hidden behind "the disciple beloved of Jesus" ? Who was John, the "old" author of the epistles ? And did the same hand that wrote the Apocalypse According to John write the gospel ? Isn't the very notion of authorship misleading when considering this literature ?

12 - ACCORDING TO JOHN

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How can one explain that the Gospel According to John is both a great piece of literature and a text fraught with anomalies and contradictions throughout?

What is the meaning of the fact that it was written in different stages, as these oddities prove? Why is the fourth Evangelist sometimes perceived as the "father of anti-Semitism"? In the fourth gospel, is Jesus addressing the people of his century, or is it the Evangelist two or three generations later speaking to his people at the very moment when Christianity is born out of Judaism and branches off from it? What body was lowered from the cross after the death of Jesus? The tortured body of a martyred man, his blood let like the sacrificial Easter lamb? A mystical body, the embodiment of God in the flesh, who through his death and resurrection atoned for the sins of all mankind? Or the body of a text?

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