



# Jesus was a hobo, academic claims

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SUPPLIED

**HOBO JESUS:** The son of God would probably have faced persecution these days too.

A thesis that concludes Jesus Christ was crucified because he was a hobo has won the top scholarly prize at Auckland University.

And if he were alive today he would probably be persecuted for the same reasons, says Dr Robert Myles, whose paper "Jesus the Bum: An Ideological Reading of Homelessness in the Gospel of Matthew" won the Auckland University vice-chancellor's award for the best doctoral thesis. It was chosen from 321 entries.

The idea of the Son of God wrapped in a tatty blanket and living on the streets is the antithesis of the modern day notion of Jesus as the world's saviour - but Myles says it's the most probable explanation of his life: one of forced displacement, political turmoil and instability. And besides, the Bible does say Jesus had "nowhere to lay his head" (Luke 9:58).

"The impression you might see of Jesus on television - he will not have dirt on his face. He might be seen as a homeless person, but never a bum. The offensiveness of homelessness and the depravity of it is extracted. But this would have been one of the factors that led to his execution by the ruling elite - he appeared as a criminal and an outsider."

And if the Messiah were alive now, he would be just as shunned by society, Myles said. "People are forced into homelessness by political and social factors but often it's blamed on the individual."

Auckland University head of theology Elaine Wainwright said Myle's theory was controversial. "Other studies tend to idealise Jesus and paint homelessness as a choice he makes. [Myles] puts in the context that homelessness is not a choice, but a very gritty reality. It's a completely new twist."

St John's College Reverend Karen Kemp welcomed a fresh perspective on Jesus's life but to reduce his humanity and divinity into one category of homelessness was wrong. He was an more of an itinerant leader, she said.

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