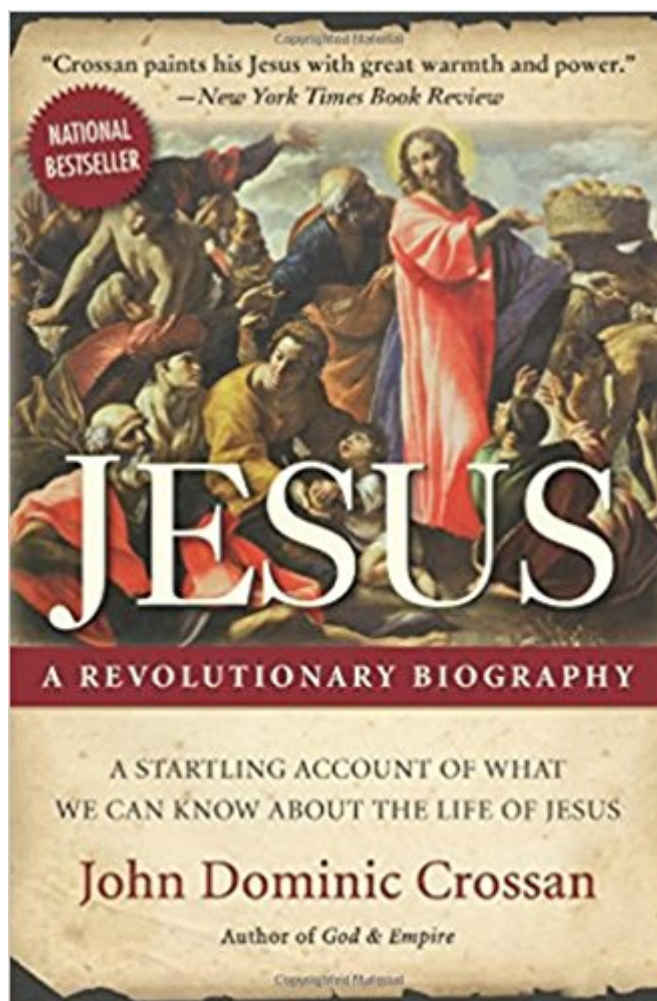


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# Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography



## Synopsis

The controversial, bestselling account of what we can know about the life of Jesus.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Based on Crossan's acclaimed and controversial *The Historical Jesus* (LJ 2/1/92), this elegant new reconstruction popularizes and occasionally elaborates on that earlier work. Gone is the massive documentation. What remains is an engrossing, often startling exploration of key themes, in which Crossan weighs scriptural texts against anthropological, historical, and literary standards, sifting through accrued layers for evidence of earlier (if noncanonical) sources. He acknowledges his naturalistic assumptions ("I presume that Jesus... could not cure... disease"), which, together with his critical method, cause him to dismiss the virgin birth, say, or the passion/resurrection narratives, as historically invalid. Yet he also offers nuanced, powerful readings of Jesus' teachings. Bound to disturb some people and stimulate others, this is recommended for all libraries where lay readers are likely to be interested in the issues raised.- Elise Chase, Forbes Lib., Northampton, Mass. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Based on Crossan's more scholarly text, *The Historical Jesus* (1992), this biographical study makes the author's view of Jesus as a social revolutionary available to a wider audience. Crossan clearly defines the problem of trying to locate the historical Jesus in the midst of myth, and he tells readers

how he intends to find that Jesus: through cross-cultural anthropology, Greco-Roman and Jewish history, and literary and textual evidence. Compared to A. N. Wilson's *Jesus: A Life* (1992), which brought a real man to life, this account gives little sense of a flesh-and-blood Jesus, though Crossan offers some thought-provoking theories about the man and his mission. What is most interesting about the book, though, is Crossan's portrayal of the times and the milieu that gave birth to a new religion. While, at the end of the book, readers may still not be sure if Jesus was a savior or a sorcerer, they will certainly understand the cultural and historical dynamics that allowed him to step forward in that particular time and that particular place. Ilene Cooper --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is a condensed and more accessible version of the author's scholarly magnum opus and is less textual criticism and more narrative. The author builds up his composite view of Jesus as someone who challenged the extremely rigid hierarchy of Roman and Jewish social classes by emphasizing a revolutionary world view based on egalitarianism and no division or discrimination between the destitute and the wealthy. The author characterizes Jesus as an itinerant faith healer who roamed the countryside bringing hope and salvation to the excluded. His rationalist interpretation of many of the events of Jesus' life will make passionate believers uncomfortable, not least his view that Christ's body on the cross was in all likelihood scavenged by animals. However, once we accept the need for a rational explanation, there is little choice but to agree with the author's take on these matters, from the scavenging of Jesus's body, to his use of trance for healing, not curing, the sick and the progressive evolution of the Resurrection story as symbolism for the revival and growth of the Christian doctrine once the early community got over the shock of Jesus' execution. My only disagreement with the author is his view that Jesus was probably not as apocalyptic as mainstream scholarship contends, I personally feel that the evidence for Jesus as an apocalyptic prophet is clinching, but that is no reflection on the quality of this book. Sure, there are more scholarly discourses on the historical Jesus but I would highly recommend reading this book and Bart Ehrman's *Jesus, Apocalyptic Prophet of the Millennium* together.

I have read several of Crossan's books, and will continue doing so. He enjoys a well-deserved, solid reputation as THE expert on the historical Jesus: who he was, the nature of the time and culture he lived in, its likely effect on him, what he said, what he did, what was done to him. If you want to know Jesus as the person he actually was (whatever else he may also have been and is now), read Crossan.

Easily the clearest, most informative book regarding "the historical Jesus" I have ever read - and I have read several. This is basically an update and edit of Crossan's much longer (and far more dense) *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, which I attempted first and found too detailed and in-depth for me and (in my opinion) probably most lay persons. In *Jesus*, Crossan places Jesus of Nazareth in historical, geographic and Jewish context, leaving the reader (this one, in any case) with as clear an educated guess of who and what Jesus was, as is likely possible.

I found this book extremely helpful in finding a more historically correct idea of what happened two thousand years ago. The Jesus that Crossan shows is a much more powerful Jesus than the one evangelical Christianity has created. It is a Jesus whose teaching of the Kingdom of God could really make a huge difference in today's society. Most people in today's world cannot relate to traditional Christian teaching - Jesus the divine man who died for our sins. But I believe that today's world can really relate to the Jesus that John Dominic Crossan portrays.

Written by one of the most prolific authors on the subject of the "Historical Jesus", this book represents a shorter synthesis of Crossan's magnum opus, "The Historical Jesus". Using three scholarly elements: cross-cultural anthropology, Roman/Jewish history and textual criticism as the legs of his stool for development of a theory on the historical Jesus, Crossan develops a picture of Jesus as a Jewish Cynic peasant, who was executed by the Romans in a relatively obscure and unremarkable way in the early first century of the Common Era. The controversies that Crossan raises and attempts to support head-on are the role of the Romans in the execution of Jesus, the primacy of Peter, the physical resurrection and ascension, the virgin birth and the nature of the healing miracles. In each case, Crossan takes a very secular or allegorical approach, and supports his position using the three elements mentioned above. The book covers a lot of ground quickly and somewhat superficially. This account is probably best seen as a primer to Crossan's theory, which can be explored in more depth in some of his other works. It is, however, an interesting and approachable read into a controversial topic.

This is essentially an abbreviated version of Crossan's *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, and it contains a lot of very good insight from one of the World's leading historical theologians and scholars. Because of his academic background and origin in the

larger work, I didn't find this book quite as accessible as Reza Aslan's more recent *Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth*, but the two books together, if you are sufficiently interested in the historical Jesus, make a very nice compliment to each other. In any case, Crossan is clearly deeply knowledgeable and often very insightful, and this book is well worth the time it took to read.

Well-researched and controversial, this vision of Jesus' life shows him as the person he was: a Jewish peasant with a deep, prophetic commitment to the downtrodden and oppressed people of Israel, a man with a deeply experiential understanding of God and of God's commitment to human freedom from oppression and injustice, who was executed for threatening the religious and political powers of the day. In Crossan's view, which he shares with scholars like Marcus Borg, Jesus was not THE Son of God, born of a Virgin, died to atone for humanity's sins, and was raised from the dead on the third day. Jesus was an illiterate peasant who was executed, as so many people were, for questioning the authority and power of religious and political leaders. In my view, this makes Jesus and what he taught accessible to everyone, as Buddha is, without needing to affiliate with Christianity. And this makes him a teacher of universal appeal and application.

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