

Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week - Book Review

For Christians, Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, who died for the sins of the world, and who rose from the dead in triumph over sin and death. For non-Christians, he is almost anything else--a myth, a political revolutionary, a prophet whose teaching was misunderstood or distorted by his followers.

Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, and no myth, revolutionary, or misunderstood prophet, insists Benedict XVI. He thinks that the best of historical scholarship, while it can't "prove" Jesus is the Son of God, certainly doesn't disprove it. Indeed, Benedict maintains that the evidence, fairly considered, brings us face-to-face with the challenge of Jesus--a real man who taught and acted in ways that were tantamount to claims of divine authority, claims not easily dismissed as lunacy or deception.

Benedict XVI presents this challenge in his new book, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*, the sequel volume to *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*.

Why was Jesus rejected by the religious leaders of his day? Who was responsible for his death? Did he establish a Church to carry on his work? How did Jesus view his suffering and death? How should we? And, most importantly, did Jesus really rise from the dead and what does his resurrection mean? The story of Jesus raises many crucial questions.

Benedict brings to his study the vast learning of a brilliant scholar, the passionate searching of a great mind, and the deep compassion of a pastor's heart. In the end, he dares readers to grapple with the meaning of Jesus' life, teaching, death, and resurrection.

"Only in this second volume do we encounter the decisive sayings and events of Jesus' life . . . I hope that I have been granted an insight into the figure of Our Lord that can be helpful to all readers who seek to encounter Jesus and to believe in Him."

-Pope Benedict XVI

"Working from Scripture, the Church Fathers and contemporary scholarship, Benedict XVI deftly brings together the historical and theological dimensions of the gospel portraits of Jesus. This is a splendid, penetrating study of the central figure of Christian faith; a learned and spiritual illumination not only of who Jesus was, but who he is for us today."

+*Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap., Archbishop of Denver*

"What better guide could you find than Benedict XVI to lead you on the bracing adventure of exploring the historical Jesus and discovering, under the tutelage of this most sage successor to Peter, the inner meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection. Faith and reason are the two wings Benedict XVI takes up to lead us to astonishingly fresh spiritual perspectives and dizzying heights. This book often takes one's breath away, while infusing in the reader the God-breathed Word, which is the Gospel."

- *Tim Gray, Ph.D., President, Augustine Institute*

"As is his first volume of Jesus of Nazareth, so, once again, in his second volume Pope Benedict XVI has authored a marvelous book, this time on the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. What makes this study so attractive is the depth of its biblical insight, its attention to historical issues, its keen theological acumen, and its lucid and precise expression. Moreover, as with the first volume, it is written in a serene and prayerful manner - a serenity and a prayerfulness that is conveyed to the heart and mind of the reader. This book fulfills Pope Benedict's ardent desire - that it would "be helpful to all readers who seek to encounter Jesus and to believe in him."

-Thomas G. Weinandy, O.F.M., Cap., Executive Director for the Secretariat for Doctrine, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

"On the Day of Pentecost, Peter sought to explain to the assembled multitude what God had done through Jesus of Nazareth, crucified and risen. Peter's successor, Benedict XVI, here undertakes the same urgent task, in fruitful dialogue with the historical-critical biblical scholarship that dominates contemporary academic study of Jesus. Charting the path of the new evangelization, Pope Benedict XVI uncovers for us the living source of Peter's evangelizing mission: Jesus, in whom God gives hope to the world."

-Matthew Levering, Ph.D., Co-Editor, Nova et Vetera, and Co-Director, Center for Catholic-Evangelical Dialogue

"This theological masterpiece courageously confronts head-on two centuries of historical exegesis and establishes a fresh way of reading the Gospels as both biography and theology in a coherent way. The author explains, "I set out to discover the real Jesus, on the basis of whom something like a Christology from below would then become possible. The quest for the historical Jesus, as conducted in mainstream critical exegesis in accordance with its hermeneutical presuppositions, lacks sufficient content to exert any significant historical impact. It is focused too much on the past for it to make possible a personal relationship with Jesus."

Here we find a compelling model for the presentation of the life of holy rabbi, Hillel or Aqiba, in the same context as we account for the life of Jesus."

- Jacob Neusner, Distinguished Service Professor of the History and Theology of Judaism; Senior Fellow, Institute of Advanced Theology - Bard College

"In Jesus of Nazareth Pope Benedict reflects on the Gospel witness to Jesus in a way that "can indeed lead to personal encounter" with Him. Just as Jesus' redemptive mission is universal, these reflections include every category of human being: for Jews, dialogue with the Old Testament; for Greeks (all seeking to know life's meaning), dialogue with reason; for Scripture scholars, approbation of truthful insights, and corrections to whatever obscures the apostolic witness to Jesus. For all men and women of all times, especially our own, who Jesus is and what He lived is set forth as entirely for them, for us. By leading the reader to discover this for us, Peter's Successor continues the ministry of strengthening the faith of the Church (Lk 22:32) so that all may come to "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (Jn 20:31)."

-Douglas G. Bushman, S.T.L., Director and Associate Professor, Institute for Pastoral Theology Ave Maria University