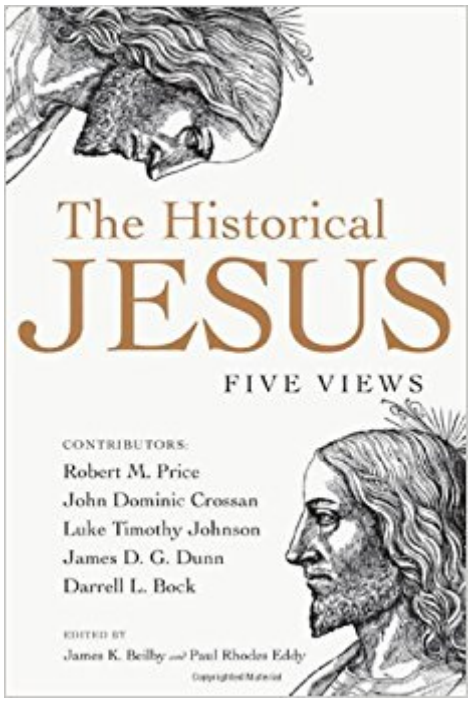
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The Historical Jesus: Five Views



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Synopsis

2011 Christianity Today Book Award winner! The scholarly quest for the historical Jesus has a distinguished pedigree in modern Western religious and historical scholarship, with names such as Strauss, Schweitzer and Bultmann highlighting the story. Since the early 1990s, when the Jesus quest was reawakened for a third run, numerous significant books have emerged. And the public's attention has been regularly arrested by media coverage, with the Jesus Seminar or the James ossuary headlining the marquee. The Historical Jesus: Five Views provides a venue for readers to sit in on a virtual seminar on the historical Jesus. Beginning with a scene-setting historical introduction by the editors, prominent figures in the Jesus quest set forth their views and respond to their fellow scholars. On the one end Robert M. Price lucidly maintains that the probability of Jesus' existence has reached the "vanishing point," and on the other Darrell Bock ably argues that while critical method yields only a "gist" of Jesus, it takes us in the direction of the Gospel portraits. In between there are numerous avenues to explore, questions to be asked and "assured results" to be weighed. And John Dominic Crossan, Luke Timothy Johnson and James D. G. Dunn probe these issues with formidable knowledge and honed insight, filling out a further range of options. The Historical Jesus: Five Views offers a unique entry into the Jesus quest. For both the classroom and personal study, this is a book that fascinates, probes and engages.

Book Information

Paperback: 312 pages
Publisher: IVP Academic (November 8, 2009)
Language: English
ISBN-10: 0830838686
ISBN-13: 978-0830838684
Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.9 x 9 inches
Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)
Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 35 customer reviews
Best Sellers Rank: #48,233 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #49 inÃ Â Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Bible Study & Reference > New Testament > Jesus, the Gospels & Acts #82 inÃ Â Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Theology > Christology #279 inÃ Â Books > Christian Books & Bibles > History

Customer Reviews

Skeptical rationalists such as Reimarus and Strauss would never have guessed that their project of

uncovering the historical Jesus would attract professing Christians. But here, in this provocative volume, readers find twenty-first-century Christians actually justifying that project as an obligation of their faith in the Incarnation. Readers thus hearÃ¢â ¬â •as one of the five researchers presented here in dialogueÃ¢â ¬â •from a Catholic scholar arguing that just as the study of history can help us learn about, say, NapolÃƒÂ©on or Socrates, so can it help us understand Jesus of Nazareth. A leading Evangelical researcher substantiates this point by explaining how historical inquiry illuminates JesusÃ¢â ¬â„¢ place within a first-century Greco-Roman culture. Yet when an Episcopalian participant questions the very existence of a historical Jesus, arguing that the Gospels merely deliver mythic archetypes, not reliable narratives, readers may see why theologians such as KÃƒÂ¤hler and Barth warnedÃ¢â ¬â •as the editors acknowledgeÃ¢â ¬â •against seeking Jesus through historical scholarship rather than through the divine miracle of faith. Certain to spark sharp debate. --Bryce Christensen

"The Historical Jesus is a worthwhile addition to your library if you are a scholar, pastor, or layperson with particular interest in the intersection of the Jesus of history with the Christ of Christian faith." (Tawa J. Anderson, Calvin Theological Journal, November 2011)"James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy succeed not only in identifying the major trends but also in bringing to the surface some of the assumptions in current historical Jesus research. They offer a sympathetic review of some of the major exponents of Jesus research from Reimarus up to the present day." (Pieter F. Craffert, Review of Biblical Literature, May 2011)"Beilby and Eddy, along with their authors, are to be commended for a job well done. I thoroughly enjoyed and highly recommend this book." (Robert B. Stewart, Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society, March 2011)"The quest to construct a historically credible presentation of Jesus is now in its third iteration, and herein five top-ranked scholars set forth their cases and critique one another, resulting in a lively give-and-take. The resultant debate is evenhanded and illuminating, setting clear, stark alternatives before the reader. Highly recommended." (S. Young, Choice, May 2010)"Certain to spark sharp debate." (Bryce Christensen, Booklist, November 15, 2009)"Beilby and Eddy have compiled a fascinating 'virtual seminar' on the quest for the historical Jesus in their release, The Historical Jesus." (CBA Retailers + Resources, November/December 2009)

Five noted scholars discuss what we can determine about the historical Jesus: Robert Price, Dominic Crossan, Luke Timothy Johnson, James Dunn, and Darrell Bock. It's a wide range, from confirmed believers to one who argues that no historical Jesus existed at all.Jesus scholarship

continues to evolve, but it seems to me to be spiraling the target instead of zeroing in. For example, virtually all scholars now accept that Jesus was recognized by his contemporaries as a miracle worker and healer, while less trust is being placed in the "embarrassment criteria" that has prompted scholars to trust the Gospel of Mark above others.The book is presented in debate style, and the contributors pull no punches. Each presents a short argument, maybe 30 pages long, and then each of the other four write a few pages of critique in response.Like any good debate, it may leave you more confused than when you began, but if I must choose a "winner," this time I pick the conservatives. (Please understand that, by "conservative," I mean relatively so; Christianity within reason--rejection of critical scholarship is not a prerequisite to believing.) I've gained a new respect for Bock, and I was especially impressed by Dunn's discussion of oral tradition. Dunn argues that it's reasonable, once we capture in our minds the faith of the first followers of Jesus, to trace the Gospel writings back through normal oral transmission to Jesus himself, and suggests that the Gospels are not taken seriously enough by Jesus scholars. It is those who were so greatly impressed by Jesus that can give us the best glimpse of why they were impressed. He closes with this provocative conclusion: "Those who still experience the Jesus tradition as living tradition may well be best placed to appreciate the initial stages of the traditioning process, that it is the ear of faith which is likely to hear the Gospels most effectively, and that the living quality of the Jesus tradition is most likely to be experienced by those who in effect sit with these early assemblies in sharing their memories of Jesus and in seeking to live by them."

I found this book with its five distinctive viewpoints and arguments about the "real" historical Jesus to be involving and sometimes "maddening", which I guess is not surprising as..in any area of academic interest there are few consensus answers to many of the outstanding questions in one's field of expertise. Consider, for example the wide range of conclusions our the Supreme Court Justices's make with respect to the many cases of constitutional law they interpret. If nothing else this book shows that such differences about nature of the real or historical Jesus...will always remain. That said I was continually stimulated by the insights and arguments and critiques by the various presenters. In summary a good value for anyone interested in this question.

The Historical Jesus: Five Views is a survey of (obviously) five different scholarly viewpoints concerning the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth. I really enjoy books such as these because the reader is able to get a taste of differing viewpoints all contained in the same book. Also, the scholarly back-and-forth discussion definitely gives the book more depth.The five contributing

scholars are Robert Price, John Dominic Crossan, Luke Timothy Johnson, James Dunn, and Darrell Bock. I felt that the contributors were spread evenly across the scholarly spectrum with Price representing the fringe Jesus-Myth position and Bock representing the conservative evangelical position. Price's essay was mostly a joke. His "hypotheses" are quickly (and easily) shot down by the remaining contributors. Crossan's portrait of the historical Jesus seems possible at first glance, however the other contributors demonstrate how implausible the picture he paints is. I found Johnson's and Dunn's articles to be the best and the most scholarly objective. In fact, it made me want to go out and buy their respective monographs. Bock's portrait of the historical Jesus (while seemingly comfortable) is too conservative and it's obvious that Bock is not skeptical enough with regards to his methodology.Overall, I greatly enjoyed this survey. It allows the reader to receive a taste-test of the different scholarly (or not so scholarly) viewpoints regarding the historical Jesus and what ideas we can formulate about him. I recommend this book for a beginner looking into historical Jesus studies or anyone with an interest in said studies.

This book is the best primer for anyone interested in the historical Jesus study. Not only do you get 5 very different views, but also each author's writing is a rich index of other sources. The one issue I have is the author does not again respond to their critiques, I think that would make this book a 100% perhaps in a new edition.

This is a good summary of the current state of historical Jesus studies. The opening historiographic essay is excellent. For most of the book five writers from all over the spectrum make their points--one writing, the other four responding--this pattern repeating until everyone has had his say.

This is a great book for anyone interested. Read it for a Synoptic Gospels class. Then I went on to purchase it for my mom to read.

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