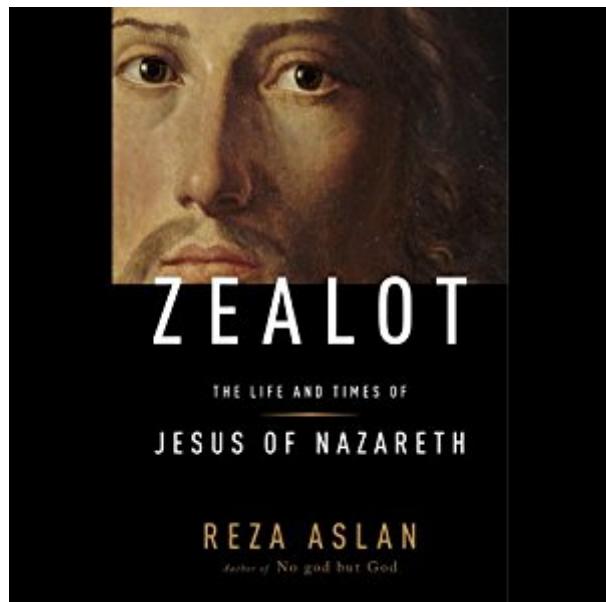


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Zealot: The Life And Times Of Jesus Of Nazareth



Synopsis

From the internationally best-selling author of *No god but God* comes a fascinating, provocative, and meticulously researched biography that challenges long-held assumptions about the man we know as Jesus of Nazareth. Two-thousand years ago, an itinerant Jewish preacher and miracle worker walked across the Galilee, gathering followers to establish what he called the "Kingdom of God". The revolutionary movement he launched was so threatening to the established order that he was captured, tortured, and executed as a state criminal. Within decades after his shameful death, his followers would call him God. Sifting through centuries of mythmaking, Reza Aslan sheds new light on one of history's most influential and enigmatic characters by examining Jesus through the lens of the tumultuous era in which he lived: first-century Palestine, an age awash in apocalyptic fervor. Scores of Jewish prophets, preachers, and would-be messiahs wandered through the Holy Land, bearing messages from God. This was the age of zealotry - a fervent nationalism that made resistance to the Roman occupation a sacred duty incumbent on all Jews. And few figures better exemplified this principle than the charismatic Galilean who defied both the imperial authorities and their allies in the Jewish religious hierarchy. Balancing the Jesus of the Gospels against the historical sources, Aslan describes a man full of conviction and passion, yet rife with contradiction; a man of peace who exhorted his followers to arm themselves with swords; an exorcist and faith healer who urged his disciples to keep his identity a secret; and ultimately the seditious "King of the Jews" whose promise of liberation from Rome went unfulfilled in his brief lifetime.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I've read the book (unlike so many of the "reviewers" who gave it one star) and here are some points.1) This is a popularization of recent (late 20th-early 21st century) reputable scholarship regarding Jesus. There's nothing in this book that would surprise a person (like myself) who has read pretty much all of the accessible scholarship on Jesus published in the last 30 or so years. Just going through the (extensive!) notes and bibliography at the end indicates to me that Aslan has done his homework.2) Aslan takes the position that Jesus was a zealot for God and God's Temple, but (and this is repeated several times in the book) he was not a member of the Zealot Party, which wouldn't arise until over 30 years after Jesus' death. In this, Jesus was just one of a number of people who arose in the period from the reign of Herod the Great to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE and his fate was like those others. In short, Jesus was killed for his zealotry, which was perceived as a threat to the Roman authorities and particularly to the Jewish sycophants who ran the Temple (and profited nicely from it). This is not a position shared by many members of the religious scholarship fraternity, who have attempted to carve out a position for Jesus where he's a religious figure who did not delve at all into politics. It's an interesting argument that I can't do justice in a few short sentences. If you're interested, you'll have to read the book yourself and decide if Aslan makes his case.3) Aslan doesn't stop with the death of Jesus, and, as someone writing history, not hagiography, he carefully notes that he can't pass judgment on whether Jesus' resurrection occurred, because it is not a historical event but an event of faith.

A disclaimer: I'm an atheist, I majored in classics and I paid full price for this book at a brick & mortar. Let that say what it will about my judgment. Now, if you seek confirmation that Jesus was/is the one, true Son of God, the savior of humanity, through which all can attain an everlasting life...that's not in this book. If you want a book by a Christian and for Christians, which will echo and confirm your Christian beliefs, then this is not the book for you. Don't buy it, don't waste your time and money. There are plenty of other books out there that are just what you're searching for. I can't give you any recommendations (my apologies) but I'm sure a quick search on google or a trip to your local Christian book seller will get you started. Good luck, have a nice day. On the other hand, if you have an open mind and an interest in history, you probably will enjoy this book. Christian, Atheist or whatever, there is no denying the impact Jesus has had on history. There is so much we will never know - can never know - about the life and times of Jesus of Nazareth - not the Jesus you learn about at Sunday school or vacation bible study. This book is about the Nazarean, whom every Christian will tell you walked as a man among men. Reza Aslan investigates this man and the world

that he was born into, his short life and his agonizing death, and tries to fill in the blanks where he can with conjecture based on scholarship. To the Kind Reader of this Review: If you are honestly researching this book, I would consider extremely suspect any one or two-star reviews. I don't feel one or two stars is a fair rating of what you can expect. Yet I do have my reservations about this book, though I admit I'm no biblical scholar.

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