

Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time: The Historical Jesus and the Heart of Contemporary Faith

By Marcus J. Borg

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Of the many recent books on the historical Jesus, none has explored what the latest biblical scholarship means for personal faith. Now, in *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*, Marcus Borg addresses the yearnings of those who want a fully contemporary faith that welcomes rather than oppresses our critical intelligence and openness to the best of historical scholarship. Borg shows how a rigorous examination of historical findings can lead to a new faith in Christ, one that is critical and, at the same time, sustaining.

Drawing on his own journey from a naïve, unquestioning belief in Christ through collegiate skepticism to a mature and contemporary Christian faith, Borg illustrates how an understanding of the historical Jesus can actually lead to a more authentic Christian life—one not rooted in creed or dogma, but in a life of spiritual challenge, compassion, and community.

In straightforward, accessible prose, Borg looks at the major findings of modern Jesus scholarship from the perspective of faith, bringing alive the many levels of Jesus's character: spirit person, teacher of alternative wisdom, social prophet, and movement founder. He also reexamines the major stories of the Old Testament vital to an authentic understanding of Jesus, showing how an enriched understanding of these stories can uncover new truths and new pathways to faith.

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Editorial Review

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All Christianity is, to some extent, idolatrous. Christian worship is a response to a worshiper's image of Jesus, and all images of Jesus fall short of his reality--in the same way that all biographies and portraits fail to depict a whole person. In *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*, New Testament scholar Marcus Borg attempts to understand how popular images of Jesus connect Christians to their savior and isolate them from him. Borg writes about his own evolving ideas of who Jesus was, considers the scholarly and popular religious evolution of Jesus' public image, and investigates with special care the effects of Historical Jesus research on contemporary images of Jesus. *Meeting Jesus Again* is written in an affable, gracious, and unflinchingly honest voice. Borg's description of his own faith particularly exemplifies these qualities, and gives the reader a simultaneously safe and unsettling new perspective on the peasant from Galilee: "[T]he central issue of the Christian life is not believing in God or believing in the Bible," he writes. "Rather, the Christian life is about entering into a relationship with that to which the Christian tradition points, which may be spoken of as God, the risen, living Christ, or the Spirit. And a Christian is one who lives out his or her relationship to God within the framework of the Christian tradition." --*Michael Joseph Gross*

From Library Journal

Borg (religion and culture, Oregon State Univ.) provides an account of contemporary Jesus scholarship--told in simple language for lay readers--and of his personal struggle to find authentic, mature faith. Here, the historical pre-Easter Jesus and the post-Easter Jesus (whom other writers have referred to as the Christ of faith), or the Jesus revealed by scholarship and the Jesus of Christian tradition are brought together as Borg articulates his own struggle from doubt to faith. His struggle is grounded in contemporary scholarship, personal experience, and "an understanding of the Christian life as a relationship to the Spirit of God--a relationship that involves one in a journey of transformation." Highly recommended.

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From [Booklist](#)

A participant in the Jesus Seminar, the group of biblical scholars whose studies to ascertain what Jesus really said eventuated in *The Five Gospels*, Borg is further concerned with how Jesus' original message may remain at "the heart of contemporary faith." In the six chapters of this book, he first presents his own journey of faith from childhood's trusting belief through young adult skepticism to mature apprehension that a "Christian is one who lives out his or her relationship to God within the framework of the Christian tradition." That tradition, subsequent chapters argue, arises out of four aspects of the "pre-Easter Jesus": Jesus as a "spirit person" (i.e., one who had an "experiential awareness of the reality of God"), a teacher of wisdom, a social prophet, and a movement founder. Further, the tradition calls upon Christians to follow Jesus "from life under the lordship of culture to the life of companionship with God" and from belief not in fixed doctrines but in giving one's heart to the "living Lord, the side of God turned toward us." First-class argumentation for experiential as opposed to institutional Christianity. *Ray Olson*

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