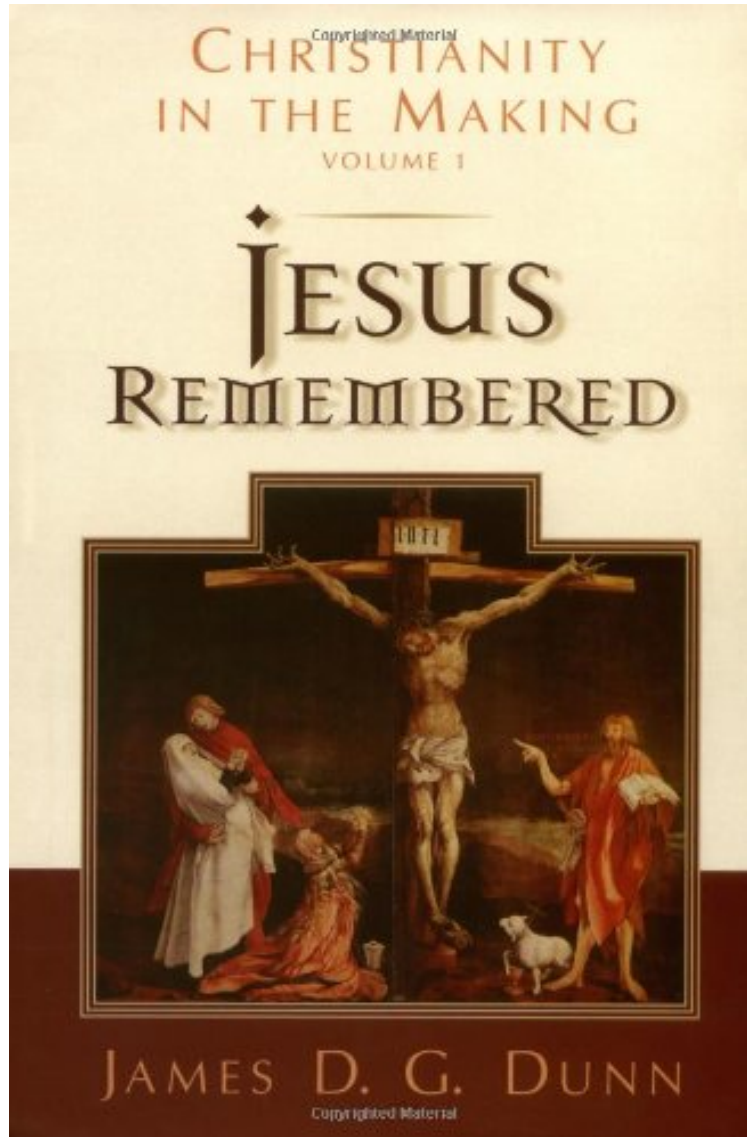


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Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making, Volume 1

James D. G. Dunn

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James D. G. Dunn : Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making, Volume 1 before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making, Volume 1:

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Impressive Undertaking - Speculative FieldBy Reader` Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making' is the first volume in a planned three volume series on the origins and early years of Christianity by noted New Testament (NT) scholar James Dunn. The series is an ambitious undertaking and

upon completion promises to be Dunn's Magnum Opus. In a broad sense the series, and especially this first volume, is situated in what is often referred to the 'Third Quest' for the historical Jesus. Dunn attempts to distinguish his approach by focusing on how Jesus impacted and was remembered those who encountered him, rather, than attempting to get to an objective Jesus behind these remembrances. While I appreciate Dunn's effort to nuance his case, it feels very much like the standard Jesus Quest approach, he makes assumptions, examines data and makes conjectures about the historic Jesus. The book has much strength. With regard to more general issues Dunn does an excellent job of highlighting the difficulties and potential pitfalls associated with this type of scholarship, e.g. translations, cultural context, textual archaeology, theological presuppositions etc. All of which are handled with Dunn's characteristic insight and clarity. It is a helpful reminder to experts and novices alike. In addition Dunn makes a good case for a move away from a rigid literary-textual approach to the gospels. He argues that even if one supposes that ancient Israel was a comparatively literate society many of the gospel stories were likely well known and frequently recounted in public oral performances prior to the being captured in their present form. An environment, Dunn argues, would have allowed for the core messages to have been preserved despite some variability in performances. With respect to specific issues the text also has much to offer, I particularly enjoyed Dunn's overview of the 'son of man' debate, - the question as to how this expression is best understood, is it a broad generic term, as in 'one', or a titular designator as in the Daniel's tradition. With regards to drawbacks, I offer a couple of thoughts. First, the text is physically too large for a single volume at over a thousand pages (approx. 300-400 of notes and references!). This form of contemporary biblical scholarship is at once both impressive; engagement with such an enormous range of scholars, and frustrating, more concerned compilations of scholarly opinion with limited value-added analysis. Second, while a fascinating and interesting field it is important to remain mindful that NT scholarship is highly speculative. It is its own type of historic fiction, where scholar and layman alike see what they believe, giving credence to interpretations and information they support while dismissing that which they oppose. As with others in the field Dunn falls prey to the classic problem of Historic Jesus study - creating a Jesus in the scholar's image - It seems unavoidable. While I greatly admire Dunn, he seems to be trying to fashion a Christian story which is acceptable to modern Western intellectuals, affirming the feasibility of belief in an historic resurrection yet positing a deflated Jesus largely devoid of the miraculous - it is difficult to see how such a Jesus could attract followers or inspire a religion? Ultimately, this is an impressive work by one of today's leading NT scholars. I enjoy Dunn and will likely read the subsequent two volumes in the series. I recommend the book to students of the NT and the historic Jesus.

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. the best of everything that I have encountered
By James H. Reynolds
This is a scholarly work of some length and significance. I am not a scholar but have read fairly widely in the area of "the search for the historical Jesus". This, by far, the best of everything that I have encountered. At first, I wondered about the lengths that Dr. Dunn has gone to in the details presented in background to his main points. It did not take long to realize that his detailed explanations were well worth the time. This is a wonderful work from a real scholar who pursues the truth and does not let his own preconceptions intrude on his reasoning or his explanations.

25 of 25 people found the following review helpful. Worth Reading
By S. E. Moore
I would rank James Dunn with the best New Testament scholars I have read to include John Meier, Richard Bauckham, E. P. Sanders, and Albert Schweitzer. Dunn is a secular scholar. This is not the kind of fluff you would find in an evangelical bookstore. Yet he challenges the theories of modern liberal Jesus questers who want to transform the historical person of Jesus into a non-apocalyptic moral sage or a political revolutionary. Dunn rightly claims that the idea of Jesus as a Mediterranean peasant or a wandering cynic philosopher fails to place him within first century Palestinian Judaism. The idea of Jesus as a political revolutionary also lacks merit. The Zealot party and the events leading up to the Jewish War occurred decades after Jesus was crucified. Dunn also challenges the theory of a separate "Q" gospel and the so-called "Q" community. The "Q" verses makes no mention of Jesus' resurrection which is an event too critical to have been glossed over by any of his followers. The most likely explanation for these verses is that that Luke's gospel borrowed them from Matthew. Dunn claims that the historical Jesus is enshrined in the gospels. Even though the gospels were written in light of the resurrection, they are still the only real sources we have in regard to the historical person of Jesus. The traditions preserved in the synoptic gospels reflect a time when the day of judgement and the full manifestation of God's Kingdom were expected to occur in the near future. The apocryphal or so called gnostic gospels, including the highly touted Gospel of Thomas, lack this apocalyptic element and were therefore most likely written long after the fervor of Jesus' imminent return died down. Dunn goes to great length in articulating Jesus' self understanding using three role models: Davidic messiah, Son of Man, and eschatological prophet. Jesus was crucified by the Romans on charges of claiming to be the king of the Jews and was often hailed as the Son of David. His prophetic demonstration of riding a donkey into Jerusalem and his use of Psalm 110 indicates that he accepted this role. The identification of Jesus as Daniel's apocalyptic Son of Man was certainly given to him by his disciples after the resurrection. However, it is unclear if Jesus ever really assigned this role too himself in light of Luke 12:8 in which he assigns this role to someone other than himself. Dunn concludes, along with Schweitzer, that this may have been a future role Jesus saw himself fulfilling. Dunn makes the convincing argument that it was the role of an apocalyptic prophet which most clearly defined Jesus and his ministry. Jesus emerged from the circle of John the Baptist and was motivated by the conviction that the day of judgement or

baptism by fire as articulated by the prophet Daniel was soon to come. Dunn suggests that the gospel portrayal of John the Baptist is far more accurate than Josephus who wrote to a Roman audience. Josephus had to tone down John's role as an apocalyptic prophet and transformed him into a teacher of moral and virtue. It is unlikely that Herod would have been overly concerned with a moral philosopher. It is unclear if John identified Jesus as the one who was to come because Jesus failed to enact the fiery judgement which John expected. Although Jesus continued John's gospel of the coming kingdom and fiery judgement, his message placed a greater stress on grace and forgiveness. Jesus was unique in his open table fellowship and inclusion of sinners and those considered unclean into the kingdom. This definitely separates him from the Qumran community. As a teacher, Jesus did not expound upon the Torah but used his own authority based upon the unique father-son relationship he felt he had with God. The ethics which Jesus taught were best described as prophetic ethics in light of the coming kingdom. This explains the radical nature of some of his ethics which often exceeded the requirements of the Torah. Jesus was greatly influenced by Isaiah who stressed purity of heart and love of God and neighbor over the ritual requirements of the law. Dunn suggests that Jesus more than likely saw himself fulfilling the role of Isaiah's "suffering servant" toward the end of his ministry. After his prophetic demonstration against the Temple money changers, Jesus would have been extraordinarily naive not to believe that it would lead to his suffering and death. The idea of the vindication of the righteous martyr whose suffering and death would act as an atonement can be found in the Maccabean writings as well. Dunn effectively argues that the gospels were not likely to have been fabricated long after Jesus' death. The betrayal of Judas Iscariot, the wavering at Gethsemane, the flight of the disciples, and Mary Magdalene being the first witness to the empty tomb, could hardly have been fabricated by the church. In addition, there is no mention of any veneration of Jesus' tomb by his disciples which blows away any theories about a "Jesus family tomb". The events that Jesus predicted which his disciples would witness never happened. The earthquake, the opening of the tombs, the resurrection of the righteous dead, and the rending of the Temple veil, which occurred when Jesus gave up the ghost, probably were events that were expected to happen and inserted into the gospels later. However, the resurrection of Jesus convinced the disciples that the Son of Man did indeed come on the clouds to the Ancient of Days and receive His kingdom. In that respect, Jesus' hope for the Kingdom of God had been realized.

James Dunn is regarded worldwide as one of today's foremost biblical scholars. Having written groundbreaking studies of the New Testament and a standard work on Paul's theology, Dunn here turns his pen to the rise of Christianity itself. *Jesus Remembered* is the first installment in what will be a monumental three-volume history of the first 120 years of the faith. Focusing on Jesus, this first volume has several distinct features. It garners the lessons to be learned from the "quest for the historical Jesus" and meets the hermeneutical challenges to a historical and theological assessment of the Jesus tradition. It provides a fresh perspective both on the impact made by Jesus and on the traditions about Jesus as oral tradition -- hence the title "Jesus Remembered." And it offers a fresh analysis of the details of that tradition, emphasizing its characteristic (rather than dissimilar) features. Noteworthy too are Dunn's treatments of the source question (particularly Q and the noncanonical Gospels) and of Jesus the Jew in his Galilean context. In his detailed analysis of the Baptist tradition, the kingdom motif, the call to and character of discipleship, what Jesus' audiences thought of him, what he thought of himself, why he was crucified, and how and why belief in Jesus' resurrection began, Dunn engages wholeheartedly in the contemporary debate, providing many important insights and offering a thoroughly convincing account of how Jesus was remembered from the first, and why. Written with peerless scholarly acumen yet accessible to a wide range of readers, Dunn's *Jesus Remembered*, together with its successor volumes, will be a *sine qua non* for all students of Christianity's beginnings.

Homiletic "This tome takes its place among the equally voluminous and deep contributions of scholars like Crossan, John Meier, N.T. Wright, and Walter Wink. . . Most important for preachers is the way Dunn interprets the words and deeds of Jesus and stories of his life as an unfolding, living tradition of interpretation. It helps us to understand our own work as part of that unfolding, living tradition. . . ." *Toronto Journal of Theology* "Dunn is to be commended for his challenging and insightful work. It must be read by all who are interested in the field, and it is destined to become a significant conversation partner in future discussions of the historical Jesus." Christopher Tuckett "A magnificent achievement. *Jesus Remembered* is massively thorough and wide-ranging, innovative in its stress on orality, at times provocative, yet also immensely readable and clear. James Dunn's book will undoubtedly shape Jesus study for the next generation and more. This is a 'must' for all those engaged in study of Jesus at whatever level." Dale C. Allison Jr. "This is not just one more book on Jesus but rather an esteemed scholar's wide-ranging presentation of conclusions arrived at over a lifetime of informed, critical reflection. It is full of good sense and much learning. As always, James Dunn's work is characterized not only by a genuine familiarity with Jesus' first-century Jewish world but also by an unsurpassed knowledge of the vast secondary literature. Especially suggestive is the consistent appeal to continuing oral tradition, which often appears justified." Samuel Byrskog "In this study one of the most prolific New Testament scholars of today presents an impressive new approach to the old 'quest for the historical Jesus.' James Dunn's central thesis that a hermeneutically informed dialogue with the ancient texts will legitimate an account of the impact of Jesus

as it was remembered by his earliest followers convincingly places the oral character of the Jesus tradition at the very center of attention. The book should not only help scholarship to free itself from the prevailing literary paradigm, but also promote a healthy balance between positivistic optimism and postmodern relativism in the search for the so-called historical Jesus. "John P. Meier "For decades James D. G. Dunn has been a leader in serious and balanced study of both christology and history-of-Jesus research. I have profited greatly from his many books and articles, and I am delighted to read this massive distillation of his many years of reflection and publication on the historical Jesus. I highly recommend Jesus Remembered to all those interested in a thoughtful and methodologically sophisticated approach to the major questions that plague and stimulate historical-Jesus research today." Mark Allan Powell "Any serious student of the historical Jesus will want to become familiar with James Dunn's thorough and somewhat unique treatment of the subject. Dunn focuses his attention on characteristic features in the early traditions concerning Jesus in order to determine the impact that the latter had on his first followers. The portrait that emerges is both convincing and thought-provoking ? an indispensable contribution to an ongoing quest to comprehend the significance of Jesus for the history of Christianity and for modern civilization." Jonathan L. Reed "Jesus Remembered provides a fresh and thorough look at Christian origins that is provocative and at the same time judicious in its assessments. James Dunn is equally at home in the history of scholarship, in the details of the Gospels, in the array of nonbiblical sources, and in the archaeology of Jesus' world, and he weaves these into a coherent and credible account of the Jesus traditions. Jesus Remembered is absolutely essential reading for scholars and pastors, and Dunn's clarity and fluid style make complex issues accessible to undergraduate students and laypersons as well."