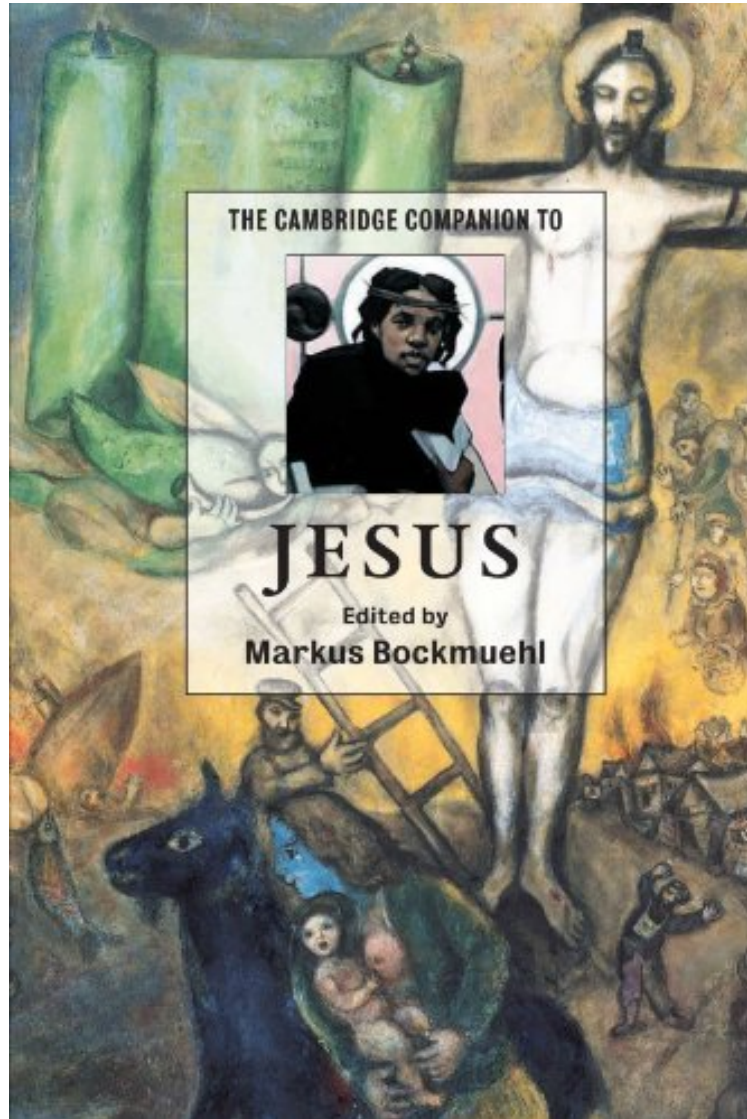


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The Cambridge Companion to Jesus (Cambridge Companions to Religion)

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From Cambridge University Press : The Cambridge Companion to Jesus (Cambridge Companions to Religion) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Cambridge Companion to Jesus (Cambridge Companions to Religion):

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. EncyclopedicBy W. CheungWritten by academics in the fields of New Testament/Biblical Studies, Theology and Divinity, including the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams,

this book is serious and it attempts to be all-encompassing. It probably has succeeded. It is divided into two parts. Part One (pp. 11-120) consists of seven chapters. The idea is to dissect the gospels to discover who Jesus of Nazareth was, predominantly historically speaking. Ch. 6 ("Crucifixion") provides an extremely plausible and coherent explanation of why Jesus was executed, and even attempts to understand his intention. Ch. 7 ("Resurrection") stresses the importance of taking the event of Jesus' Resurrection seriously. The idea is that even if you reject its reality, you need to realize that the four accounts of Jesus' life exist merely because the writers of these accounts took Jesus' Resurrection as a given fact. It therefore makes no sense to attempt to extract the historical Jesus from the Christian accounts. Chapters 1 to 5 are equally fascinating and place Jesus firmly in his first century Jewish context. Part Two (pp. 121-280) is more difficult and complex. It contains "critical and theological reflection" (p. 2) on Jesus. Ch. 9 ("Quests for the historical Jesus") warns, via Martin Kähler, that "the Quest was in the end a subjective exercise, in which scholars created fifth gospels that had more to do with themselves than with the gospel proper" (p. 145). Ch. 10 ("The quest for the real Jesus") meditates on Mark 8:27 - "Who do people say that I am?". The concept is that there has always been more than one possible answer - it depends on what you believe in. The point therefore is historical research will always generate a different answer from those of the believers. Ch. 11 ("Many gospels, one Jesus?") is fascinating. While all four accounts do not agree in all factual details, "what a plurality of gospel offers is a complex repetition and multiple elaboration that intensifies and complicates" (p. 182). Each author represents his own early Christian group and slightly different perspectives are in fact quite understandable. Ch. 12 ("The Christ of the Old and New Testament") discusses the seemingly inappropriate application of the title Messiah to Jesus, because this title means something completely different in the Old Testament. On the other hand, it argues strongly that this concept was fluid and upon interpretation because of the convoluted context of Jewish history. From Ch. 13, the books get even harder and deeper. Ch. 13 ("Jesus in Christian doctrine") ostensibly is about the Nicene creed, the Arian heresy, and Christology, it actually warns that theological inadequacy will lead to, quoting Karl Barth, "the rebellious establishment of some very private worldview as a kind of papacy" (p. 217). Ch. 14 ("A history of faith in Jesus") by Archbishop Williams warns "Jesus is not the terminus of Christian experience and prayer, and when he becomes so, something is lost and confused in the Christian mind" (p. 234) - in other words, modern sentimentality and sensuality should not supplant the "primitive Christian seriousness about judgement and change" (ibid.). The ultimate chapter ("The future of Jesus Christ") is very deep. The concept is that Jesus can only be properly understood in the context of the parousia which has not yet come (!). I must admit I am a bit lost here. So in summary: a comprehensive survey on Jesus. Five stars. 17 of 23 people found the following review helpful. Who do YOU say that I am? By wolvie051 borrowed this book expecting the usual academic skepticism and 'debunking'. What I found instead was a full, fair and reverent treatment of most of the major issues surrounding Jesus' life and his legacy which, surprisingly, almost amounts to a defense of Jesus' divinity. The introduction by Markus Bockmuehl and his essay on the resurrection are second to none. Having heard much more about N.T. Wright and his Jesus Seminar critics, I had completely overlooked this eloquent, learned British scholar, a firm Christian as well as immensely knowledgeable about the New Testament. It is simply amazing that whereas England is one of the most secular nations in Europe, it produces some of the finest orthodox scholars in religion-and-science (Denis Alexander, R.J. Berry, John Polkinghorne, etc.) as well as NT studies (Bockmuehl, N.T. Wright, etc.). Well worth reading.

This Companion's starting point is the realization that Jesus of Nazareth cannot be studied purely as a subject of ancient history, or as "a man like any other man". History, literature, theology and the dynamic of a living, worldwide religious reality appropriately impinge on the study of Jesus. This book therefore incorporates the most up-to-date historical work on Jesus with the "larger issues" of critical method--the story of Christian faith and study, as well as Jesus in a global church and in the encounter with Judaism and Islam.

"This is an immensely rich and rewarding compendium of essays by seventeen notable biblical scholars and theologians, together offering a largely complementary and always challenging range of historical and theological reflections upon Jesus' life and its effects...a remarkably coherent and comprehensive set of studies, surely the best of its kind currently available." Toronto Journal of Theology
About the Author Markus Bockmuehl is Reader in New Testament Studies at the University of Cambridge and Fellow of Fitzwilliam College. He is the author of *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity* (1990), *This Jesus: Martyr, Lord, Messiah* (1994), *The Epistle to the Philippians* (1997), and *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches: Halakhah and the Beginning of Christian Public Ethics* (2000).