

A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, Vol. 2 - Mentor, Message, and Miracles

By John P. Meier

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This book is the second volume in John Meier's masterful trilogy on the life of Jesus. In it he continues his quest for the answer to the greatest puzzle of modern religious scholarship: Who was Jesus? To answer this Meier imagines the following scenario: "Suppose that a Catholic, a Protestant, a Jew, and an agnostic were locked up in the bowels of the Harvard Divinity School library... and not allowed to emerge until they had hammered out a consensus document on who Jesus of Nazareth was and what he intended...". *A Marginal Jew* is what Meier thinks that document would reveal. Volume one concluded with Jesus approaching adulthood. Now, in this volume, Meier focuses on the Jesus of our memory and the development of his ministry. To begin, Meier identifies Jesus's mentor, the one person who had the greatest single influence on him, John the Baptist. All of the Baptist's fiery talk about the end of time had a powerful effect on the young Jesus and the formulation of his key symbol of the coming of the "kingdom of God." And, finally, we are given a full investigation of one of the most striking manifestations of Jesus's message: Jesus's practice of exorcisms, hearings, and other miracles. In all, Meier brings to life the story of a man, Jesus, who by his life and teaching gradually made himself marginal even to the marginal society that was first century Palestine.

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- Sales Rank: #476448 in Books
- Published on: 1994-11-01
- Released on: 1994-11-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 6.45" h x 2.21" w x 9.51" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 1136 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
This second volume of Meier's proposed trilogy follows Jesus from young adulthood into the early days of his ministry as an itinerant evangelist and wonder-worker in rural, first-century Palestine. Using historical and literary criticism, Meier reveals a Jesus who, after his encounter with the apocalyptic activities of John the Baptist, develops his own message about a coming kingdom of God and then reveals it through a variety of miracles from healings to exorcisms. The Jesus of Nazareth who emerges from this study is neither the cosmic Christ of Matthew Fox nor the sanitized Savior of the New Age. He's an eschatological preacher and miracle worker. Meier's brilliant scholarship sparkles on every page of this book. Indeed, because of its narrative power and its deep insight, Meier's trilogy is likely to become the standard against which other lives of Jesus are to be measured.
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From Library Journal
This second volume in the author's life of Jesus (Vol. 1, LJ 10/15/91) discusses his ministry, focusing on his miracles, healings, other wonder works, and teachings concerning the coming kingdom of God. Meier, a Catholic priest and teacher at Catholic University of America, stresses Jesus' great dependence on the teachings and thought of John the Baptist. Meier continues to expound his thesis that Jesus was a marginal Jew in a marginal eastern Mediterranean society during the first century. Meier's extremely long, dense text, heavily documented by many footnotes, is hard going indeed and will appeal mainly to scholars in the field. All collections owning Volume 1, however, should buy this continuation. Two other recent lives of Jesus are easier to grasp by general readers and would appeal more to the public at large: John D. Crossan's The Historical Jesus (LJ 2/1/92) and A.N. Wilson's Jesus: A Life (LJ 9/15/92).
Robert A. Silver, formerly with Shaker Heights P.L., Ohio
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From Kirkus Reviews
This second volume of Meier's magisterial attempt to create a ``consensus document'' about the historical Jesus on which scholars of all faiths could agree makes some tantalizing assertions about Jesus' public ministry. Meier (New Testament Studies/Catholic Univ.) divides this successor to Volume One (subtitled The Roots of the Problem and the Person, 1991) into three parts: an examination of the pervasive effect on Jesus of the life and career of John the Baptist, whom Meier calls Jesus' ``mentor''; an analysis of the centrality to Jesus' message of the concept of the ``kingdom of God''; and an extended discussion of the historicity of Gospel accounts of Jesus' miracles, healings, and exorcisms. Meier uses John the Baptist's career as his starting point, asserting that Jesus not only accepted baptism from the charismatic preacher at the outset of his public ministry, but he also adopted John's themes of the imminent judgment of sinners and the need for reform and repentance as integral parts of his own message. Unlike John, however, Jesus emphasized the coming of the kingdom of God, which he represented as both an approaching eschatological event and, in a mystical way, as being present in the actions, beliefs, and fellowship of the community of believers: ``The kingdom of God is in your midst'' (Luke 17:21). Meier argues that Jesus' preaching of the heavenly kingdom was most manifest in his miraculous works, which Meier inventories in painstaking detail, dividing them into exorcisms, healings, raising of the dead, and ``nature'' miracles, such as walking on water and cursing the fruitless fig tree and causing it to wither. The author concludes that the power of Jesus' message arose from his actual historical fame as a miracle worker as well as from his moral teachings. Scholarly, carefully reasoned, and lucidly written, Meier's portrait of Jesus as a fiery, wonder-working

prophet rather than the gentle teacher of Christian tradition may continue the controversy (with believers and nonbelievers alike) initiated in Volume One. -- *Copyright ©1994, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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The book A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, Vol. 2 - Mentor, Message, and Miracles can give more knowledge and also the precise product information about everything you want. Exactly why must we leave a good thing like a book A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, Vol. 2 - Mentor, Message, and Miracles? A number of you have a different opinion about reserve. But one aim this book can give many info for us. It is absolutely suitable. Right now, try to closer using your book. Knowledge or data that you take for that, you can give for each other; it is possible to share all of these. Book A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, Vol. 2 - Mentor, Message, and Miracles has simple shape nevertheless, you know: it has great and massive function for you. You can appear the enormous world by open up and read a e-book. So it is very wonderful.

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