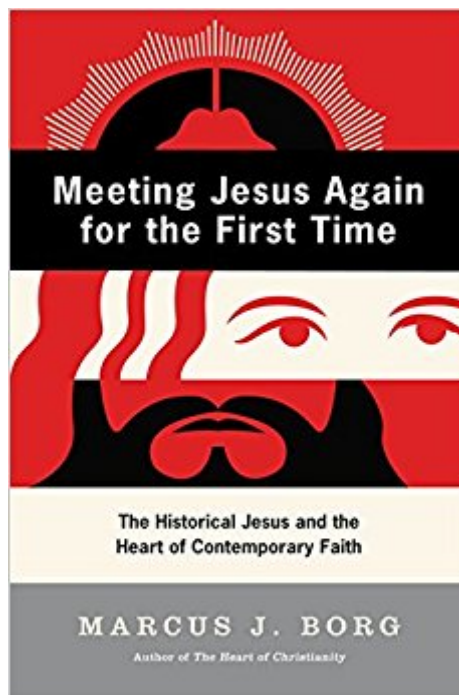




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# Meeting Jesus Again For The First Time: The Historical Jesus And The Heart Of Contemporary Faith



## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

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

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. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is what my spirit and soul has been searching for. He aligns with my understanding of the Christ and God. It is so not the God or Jesus of my youth. That was the judging and punishing God, just like my punishing and judging father. Constantly seeking to be "good enough" always falling way short. Borg gives me a God I want to relate to, a Christ that inspires, seduces, and invites. Just ordered *Meeting the Bible* and am looking forward to continuing enlightenment. What church/sect follows the spiritual version of Scripture vs. the literal? Opened my eyes and brought me hope.

This book changed my view of Jesus and gave me a lot of serious things to think about. It also helped bring me peace when dealing with the idea that there may either be no God or that Jesus himself wasn't actually God. I read this book shortly before Easter and it was very interesting how

every reading in church of the resurrection of Jesus took place in the gospel of John. The idea that resurrection is different from resuscitation had never occurred to me before. By reading this book I realize that I still have much to learn. Borg is a very clear writer and wastes few words, if you are a curious Christian you would be doing yourself a disservice by not reading this short book.

A clear, thoughtful discussion about the images of Christ and how these images affect how we practice our faith. My only issue with the book is one phrase Borg uses multiple times: "being in relationship with." He uses it in terms of being in relationship with God or the spirit of Christ. He argues that we want to move beyond simple belief and towards a more direct experience with the Divine that calls on our "being in relationship." I agree with him but I was curious to know more about what he thinks that level of faith might look like. While he takes great pains to explain every single piece of thought and terminology he presents in the rest of the book, he doesn't do so with this phrase. A missed opportunity, I think.

This book gave me a new perspective on Jesus. I can now see Jesus in a much more expansive way. The stories we are told as children are concrete and do just fine we all we can understand is concrete concepts. Unfortunately, as we get older we can understand abstract concepts, yet Jesus remained just a child's story figure. By looking at these stories as metaphor, I can now understand so much more expansively and vividly the depth of God's love for us and His working to save us from our own misguided ways.

I read this as a part of a Lenten study with laity. Some of the more technical language and detail proved a challenge to some of us. still the discussion this book engendered and the insights it inspired made our study a success and a means to reflect on aspects of our faith. I found the book well written and as a serious study still very readable and informing. I would not suggest it for entertainment or escape but as a book that encourages reflection, thought, and faith, I would say it was a blessing and a good read.

No longer do I need to either try to force myself to believe what I can't/don't about Jesus Christ, or to sacrifice my genuine spiritual experience and daily walk with the living Christ on the altar of my intellect and historical learning. For the serious Bible scholar who is well aware that we don't have, and cannot have, anything close to the "original" texts, meanings, and authors' intents of the collection of writings that make up "The Bible", but who is not content to settle for dry scholarship as

the sum total of spiritual or religious relevance in modern society or their own personal life, this author takes us through his own journey to help us see our own. This is for me a transformative work. It's a short, quick read that is dense and spiritually, as well as intellectually, satisfying beyond belief, if you'll pardon the expression.

Most of us (Americans) have been exposed to one or both of two images of Jesus, the popular image of God incarnate and the secular image of the great teacher. Marcus Borg asks us to meet the man those images were based upon, whom Borg also refers to as Jesus, but whom I prefer to call by his real name, Yeshua bar Miriam. (Greek has no /sh/ sound, so /sh/ got changed to /s/, then the Romans added the Latin inflection -us to make Iesus, pronounced yea-soose. By the time it entered Old English, the initial 'I' had been modified to 'J'. By our time the 'J' was no longer pronounced /y/, the Great Vowel Shift had changed /e/ as in 'yea' to the /ee/ of 'beet', the first /s/ had become voiced to /z/, and the /u/ had been shortened, leaving not a single sound of the original Aramaic 'Yeshua'.) It is Yeshua that Borg invites us to meet, and it is a rewarding meeting. Borg calls Yeshua a "spirit person," which he defines as "one of those persons in human history to whom the Spirit was an experiential reality." This seems to me to be a pretty good description of the Hasidim, and I think that if Yeshua were alive today, he would be a Hasid. I have known two Hasidic rabbis, and both are delightful people, as I think Yeshua, too, would be. I am not happy with the designation "spirit person," because the image it calls to my mind is of one who is not flesh and blood, but just of the stuff of thought. I realize that that is not what Dr. Borg is talking about, and I wish I could think of a brief phrase that would convey just the real phenomenon Dr. Borg is referring to. Borg fleshes out one's picture of Yeshua, so that one can feel toward him more as a real man, someone you would like to have known and respected as a personal friend, rather than just a legend. Yeshua turns out to have been a truly remarkable person, with a keen mind and an extremely charismatic personality. He was so far ahead of his time that centuries after his death, the men in control of the Christian church invented and spread a scurrilous lie about his chief disciple, the "apostle to the apostles," to discredit her, because the fact that Yeshua had chosen her instead of a man was unacceptable to them. Apparently, in their view, God (incarnate in Yeshua) had no business choosing Miriam of Magdala as chief apostle just because she was the best qualified; God should have had the decency to ignore her superior understanding of His message and choose a male instead. To borrow a sentence from Bertrand Russell, 'this view strikes me as curious.' The intended audience for this book is Christians and ex-Christians who find their faith challenged by modern knowledge of the universe, as Dr. Borg's was. Many who are open-minded enough to read beyond page 2 will find

a faith they can accept. Others won't, but will still find (as I did) that the book is well worth reading.  
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