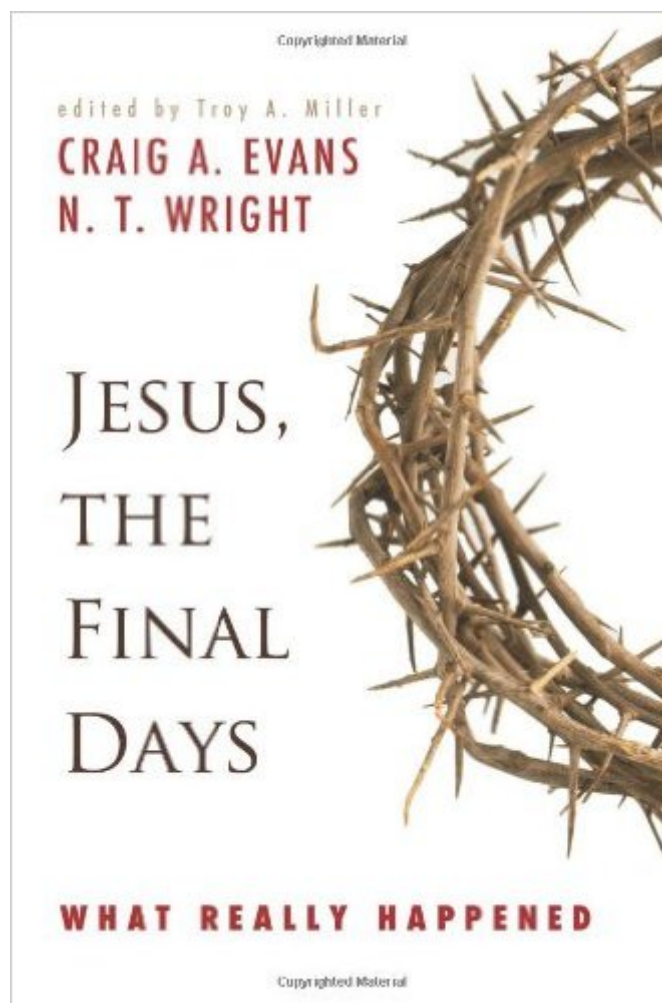


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Jesus, The Final Days: What Really Happened



Synopsis

What do history and archaeology have to say about Jesus death, burial, and resurrection? In this superb book, two of the world's most celebrated writers on the historical Jesus share their greatest findings. Together, Craig A. Evans and N. T. Wright concisely and compellingly debunk popular myths about the historical Jesus and convey the true, world-shattering significance of Jesus' final days on earth.

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Customer Reviews

This small book contains a wealth of information about the resurrection. Evans and Wright, both famous biblical scholars, have aimed it at the general reader, not the scholar, so it's accessible and entertaining. First, did Jesus exist? "No serious historian of any religious or nonreligious stripe doubts that Jesus...really lived...and was executed" (p 3). Pilate focused on the claim that Jesus was king of the Jews, which would be considered a threat to the Romans, even if Jesus only had a handful of followers. No wonder, then, that the soldiers mocked and saluted Jesus as a king, and even, on the cross, offered him spiced vinegar, a drink "which mimics spiced wine, often served to kings" (p 26). And the titulus again mentions the claim to kingship. Most readers will find the information on crucifixion and Jewish burial practices quite interesting. Recent archaeological finds have increased our knowledge here considerably, especially since a Jew who had been crucified was recently discovered. "The Jewish people thought that the soul of the deceased lingered near the corpse for three days" (p 45). The last essay, by Wright, is compelling. Wright has published an

important book on the subject of resurrection, and this is a short version of some of his main arguments. Resurrection "was not a fancy way of talking about a beautiful, glorious life after death" (p 78) nor was it about a vision of a ghost. Within Christianity, "there is virtually no spectrum of belief about resurrection" (85). The early Christians believed passionately, not only in the reality of Jesus' resurrection, but that they, also, would one day be resurrected. Wright points out that the crucifixion of Jesus should have ended his movement.

"Jesus: the Final Days" is essentially composed of three essays based on lectures from the noted scholars Dr. Craig Evans and Dr. N.T. Wright. Having read some previous writings from both authors and enjoyed them, I had high hopes for this slim volume. I was not disappointed. In fact, I only really wish they had written more on some of the subjects. The book is divided into three main segments: I. An essay by Dr. Evans examining immediate reasons why Jesus was crucified (authorities saw him as a potential political threat), who the immediate responsible parties were (Roman with some influential Jewish religious leaders cooperating), and what happened to Jesus. In particular, Evans points out the mockery and how close it follows typical Roman practice. II. Essay II concerns Jewish Burial practices and Roman law. It may be the best chapter in the book though all were enjoyable. Included are discussions involving the skeleton of Yehohanan, reasons why Jesus would have been allowed burial in the circumstances, and a number of other interesting facts (in one part, Evans even argues a point utilizing fifteenth century skeletons from Towton [the use was actually quite justified in this particular segment]). Evans also takes some good shots at the old "Swoon Theory" and Talpiot Tomb along the way. III. Essay III deals with resurrection and covers topics ranging from eyewitness sources to comparisons of Second Temple Jewish, ancient pagan, and modern feelings on the subject of Resurrection. As usual, N.T. Wright writes in a very readable style and makes on the whole good argumentation. Overall, this is a very enjoyable read and indeed a relatively quick read. It is loaded with interesting information though I wish it could have been longer.

This morning I read this short book which is comprised of three lectures given at the Symposium for Church and Academy lecture series at Crichton College (Memphis, TN). The three lectures aim to discuss the historicity of Jesus' death and resurrection - two on the former by Craig Evans, one on the latter by The Bishop himself (I mean, who else are you going to get to talk about the resurrection at this point?). Three lectures, three chapters - 1. The Shout of Death; 2. The Silence of Burial; 3. The Surprise of the Resurrection. Admittedly, there isn't much here that you cannot readily find in

other books (both for Evans and especially Wright). But there is much to be said for having this type of data assembled together in a concise overview aimed toward a wider readership than is considered typical.¹ The first chapter focusses on Jesus' death, quickly dismissing flimsy claims that Jesus did not actually die and emphasizing the reasons for the death of Jesus. Here Evans provides solid overview and foundation of the many converging factors of why Jesus was executed. Admittedly, many Christians do not understand the complexity of history on this point, and I was glad to see Evans go right at the nonsense of Jesus being crucified because he was more popular than the Pharisees, et. al. Further, the chapter investigates the question of whether or not Jesus anticipated his own death and how this anticipation shaped his preceding ministry. From this Evans then discusses the trial of Jesus, the mockery and the actual crucifixion itself - all without becoming lost in the physical suffering of Jesus but remaining forthright so as to maintain historical credibility.²

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