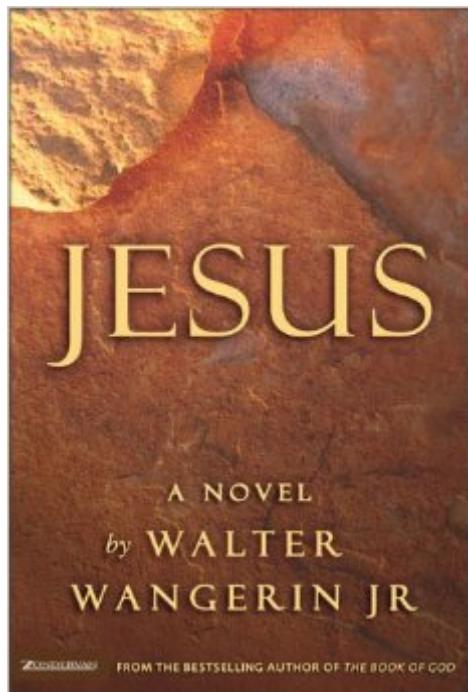


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# Jesus



## **Synopsis**

This man: Consider this man who, by his power, his peace, his simple presence, and his fierce purity, quietly turned the whole world upside down. None other could evoke such joy at his astonishing deeds, such anger at his strange aloofness, such fear when he began to draw the attention of powerful enemies . . . and such heartbreak when the inevitable came to pass. Surrounded by a circle of close relationships---his mother and her extended family, men and women drawn irresistibly by the light of his personality, the authority of his words, the power of his deeds, and above all, by the depth of his love---this carpenter from Nazareth moved toward a singular destiny. A destiny he would both fear and embrace. A destiny that would mark forever the lives of those who followed him.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"Jesus" is the third in Walter Wangerin's trilogy of novels on the Bible, following "The Book of God" (a fictionalized, edited account of the entire scope of the Bible) and "Paul" (a fictionalized, account of the life of Saint Paul). As in his earlier volumes, Wangerin puts to work his renowned story-telling ability toward the task of dramatizing the life of Christ, retelling the biblical gospel narrative for a contemporary audience. Ever the raconteur, Wangerin evokes the deep and powerful emotions that motivate all human behavior. In some ways, "Jesus" has the feel of "Wangerin Meets Peterson," that is, "Jesus" is something of a narrative in genre and a Eugene Peterson ("The Message") paraphrase. Such a comparison is not faint praise. Rather, it communicates how beautifully and

poetically Wangerin's descriptive prose evokes the very real life of Christ. For Christians wanting a fresh read on the "old, old story," and for the seeker wanting a post-modern narrative telling of the story of Christ, "Jesus" will provide hours of delightful reading. Reviewer: Bob Kellemen, Ph.D., is the author of "Soul Physicians," "Spiritual Friends," and "Beyond the Suffering: Embracing the Legacy of African American Soul Care and Spiritual Direction."

If you've grown up in the church, you may have heard the story of Jesus so many times you don't really "hear" it anymore. But in the capable hands of storyteller and National Book Award winner Walter Wangerin Jr., this classic captures our attention in a new way. Wangerin switches back and forth between the viewpoint of Mary, Jesus' mother ("Mim"), and the disciple John (called "beloved") to tell the story, which opens at the Feast of Passover in Jerusalem when Jesus is 12. A long narrative from Mary to Jesus in italics serves to fill in the details of her unexpected pregnancy, marriage, and the nativity of Christ. Readers will enjoy Wangerin's imagining what Jesus might have looked like (heavily freckled with a tight cap of curly reddish brown hair!) and his mannerisms (ticklish, accessible but unknowable). In Wangerin's narrative, Jesus is an only child who works as a carpenter with his father until Joseph meets an untimely, accidental death. But what really sings in this narrative is the relationship between Jesus and his mother, as seen from her perspective. When Jesus returns to Nazareth to begin his ministry by reading in the temple, he's first warmly welcomed, then driven away by his small hometown. We feel Mary's pride in her son, and then her pain at his rejection. Later, when Jesus goes away alone, she follows him to give him some tragic news. In beautifully crafted prose, Wangerin describes the scene as Mary tells Jesus that his beloved cousin John the Baptist is dead. "Heaven is sandy with stars, the myriad marks of God's promises, the heavenly host all holding their breath --- so Mary imagines --- preparing to weep with Jesus." Later, Jesus whispers to her, "Oh Mother, Mother --- how I loved my cousin." And Mary, who calls Jesus "My baby," (as well as "Yeshi"), comforts him as he falls asleep on her lap. Wangerin excels at offering specific details about the culture of the time period in which Jesus lived. The wedding at Cana is embellished with a bridal procession where lusty lyrics are sung: "How sweet is your love, O sister, my bride! And sweeter your loving than spices and wine." Wangerin spends several pages explaining interesting details about the wedding ceremony and the honor involved in providing enough food for seven days of celebration. Jesus' miracle, he shows, saved the bridegroom's family from shame and dishonor. Nice details for contemporary readers. In another retelling of the biblical narrative, he opens a chapter with the terse observation: "Magdala stinks." Wangerin goes on to explain that fish were dried and pickled there, and includes plenty of details about the fishing life.

The stage also is set for an encounter with Mary ("Maryam"), whom he will deliver from seven demons. Wangerin fleshes out some of the more practical aspects as well. When Jesus and his disciples are on the road, Wangerin describes how Mary wanders the hillsides and ravines, finding the right herbs to cure the ills and injuries incurred by the little band of believers (Simon has a bad cough, for example). Wangerin is specific in his descriptions, which makes the story richer. Particularly nice is a short section that imagines some of the interactions between John and Mary after Jesus' death and resurrection. John is now entrusted with Mary's care, and he finds her a bit of a challenge. She can't help interrupting him and correcting the details of his stories as he shares the Good News and the marvelous works of Jesus. "No, not Jericho. He did that near the pool of Siloam...." made me chuckle. While many readers may enjoy some of the juicy, Wangerin-ish dialogue between the characters, it occasionally creeps over the top. "Calculate before your promise, partner," says a bandit to Simon in response to his threats. Sounds a little bit like a late night western. But if you love Wangerin's style of writing, this sort of thing won't trouble you. It's part of his unique voice and inimitable storytelling style. This beautiful, unique retelling of the life of Jesus should find a home on the bookshelves of any Christian who wants a fresh perspective on their faith. --- Reviewed by Cindy Crosby. [...].

I see that I am going against the grain in giving this book only 2 stars, but as in all my reviews I give my honest opinion as I see it. The 'editorial' comment was that it is "The most important story of the Christian faith." I don't know what that comment is based on. I read historical fiction on a daily basis. This book is a novel. An author can and does take certain liberties and embellishments when writing a novel. Wangerin took this to a new level as he attempts to introduce you to Christ. He portrays Jesus as a somewhat rude, self centered taskmaster that comes off with an almost abrasive personality at times. To his credit, this author is a good story teller. I just find it unfortunate that he chose to alter the person of the 'real' Jesus to a point that in my opinion could do a lot of harm to someone that reads this book. Please get a Bible and read the book of John in order to find Jesus. It is much smaller than this novel and is filled only with truth. You will see a vast difference between a 'novel' and the true 'Word of God.'

Walter Wangerin's book, Jesus, is incredible. Given that its topic is one of the most dissected, speculated-about, and, ultimately, complex and compelling stories ever known to mankind, I was at first skeptical as to what exactly this book would recount. That skepticism dissolved quickly. Wangerin does an incredible job of showing Jesus, not only as the divine, but as the

humane, as well. Often, Christians forget what made Jesus so appealing to his followers: that he was the divine, alive in a form that they, as mortals, could relate to. This book shows much of Jesus' human side: his laughter and happiness at the wedding at Cana, his terse reproachment of his mother's desire to spare him from the pains that God had placed before him, etc. Often, it is easy to get lost in the events of the New Testament. Fortunately, we, as Christians, have Wangerin's book to give a clear view on the events of Jesus' life, and of the time period that would forever change the world.

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