

Jesus Before the Gospels: How the Earliest Christians Remembered, Changed, and Invented Their Stories of the Savior

By Bart D. Ehrman

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The bestselling author of *Misquoting Jesus*, one of the most renowned and controversial Bible scholars in the world today examines oral tradition and its role in shaping the stories about Jesus we encounter in the New Testament—and ultimately in our understanding of Christianity.

Throughout much of human history, our most important stories were passed down orally—including the stories about Jesus before they became written down in the Gospels. In this fascinating and deeply researched work, leading Bible scholar Bart D. Ehrman investigates the role oral history has played in the New Testament—how the telling of these stories not only spread Jesus' message but helped shape it.

A master explainer of Christian history, texts, and traditions, Ehrman draws on a range of disciplines, including psychology and anthropology, to examine the role of memory in the creation of the Gospels. Explaining how oral tradition evolves based on the latest scientific research, he demonstrates how the act of telling and retelling impacts the story, the storyteller, and the listener—crucial insights that challenge our typical historical understanding of the silent period between when Jesus lived and died and when his stories began to be written down.

As he did in his previous books on religious scholarship, debates on New Testament authorship, and the existence of Jesus of Nazareth, Ehrman combines his deep knowledge and meticulous scholarship in a compelling and eye-opening narrative that will change the way we read and think about these sacred texts.

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Editorial Review

Review
“Ehrman provides an intriguing overview of memory studies and introduces readers to a variety of important pioneers and studies. . . . Ehrman concludes that ‘the historical Jesus did not make history; the remembered Jesus did.’ An intriguing new angle on the well-worn field of ‘historical Jesus’ studies.” (Kirkus Review)

“An intriguing and entertaining take on the formation of the Gospels.” (Library Journal)

“With his typical humor, passion, and vivacity, Ehrman explores the ways that memory shapes, distorts, changes, and preserves the stories of Jesus passed along by the Christian community. Ehrman’s provocative book raises engaging questions that drive readers back to the sources of our information about Jesus.” (*Publishers Weekly*)

“One can see why Ehrman is so widely known and respected by so many people. Here Ehrman takes a completely different approach from his previous books. This book is a new approach to the study of the beginnings of Christianity.” (*Association for Mormon Letters*)

”Jesus Before the Gospels is a scholarly yet readable study of Jesus and the Gospels. Ehrman’s scholarship remains unmatched. Ehrman unveils several unexplored aspects of the life of Jesus and the Gospels. Everybody with an interest in Christianity and religion in general will find this fascinating book useful.” (*Washington Book Review*)

“With *Jesus Before the Gospels*, Bart D. Ehrman has written a thought-provoking book prompted by his interest as a historian in the various traditions about Jesus. Enjoyable to read ” (*America* Magazine)

“Our secular culture continues to be profoundly impacted by biblical influences - including fundamentalist biblical influences - and this controversial book raises some important questions.” (*State of Belief* Radio)

“Why buy this book if you’ve already got lots of volumes about Jesus? This book is something new. You’ll discover people in this book that you would never encounter in other religious books. There’s nothing like this 300-page exploration of our earliest human memories of Jesus.” (Read The Spirit)

“Ehrman is one of the foremost voices in the historical Jesus debates. In this, the latest of a long list of influential books, he combines his ideas about Jesus with cutting-edge research from cognitive psychology, cultural anthropology, and sociology. He more than succeeds in achieving his goal. Highly recommended.” (Spirit Connection NY)

“Author Bart Ehrman tackles a central question for scholars of the New Testament-- the accuracy of the text.” (NPR's Interfaith Voices)

“In his latest book, controversial New Testament scholar Bart Ehrman applies new scientific understanding of how memory works to the gospels.” (WYPR)

“Were the authors of the gospels who told fanciful stories about Jesus making stuff up, or did they have faulty memories, or both? Bart Ehrman, one the most renowned and controversial religious scholars in the

world, tackles the issue of Jesus and memory." (Progressive Spirit Podcast)

"Ehrman is known to his legion of readers as a scholar who has spent his academic career debunking long-held assumptions of traditional Christian belief. *Jesus Before the Gospels* applies contemporary memory science to the oral traditions of the early Christians." (Religion News Service)

"A fascinating look at how memory affects the stories we tell and even our recollection of history." (*Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*)

"No one makes it easier to study the Bible than Ehrman. *Jesus Before the Gospels* is essential. Ehrman presents a much needed, brilliant argument-one that challenges unsubstantiated assumptions about the reliability of the Gospels." (David Kyle Johnson, PsychologyToday.com's 'A Logical Take' blog)

From the Back Cover

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About the Author

Bart D. Ehrman is one of the most renowned and controversial Bible scholars in the world today. He is the James A. Gray Distinguished Professor of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and is the author of more than twenty books, including the *New York Times* bestsellers *How Jesus Became God; Misquoting Jesus; God's Problem; Jesus, Interrupted*; and *Forged*. He has appeared on *Dateline NBC, The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, CNN, History*, and top NPR programs, as well as been featured in *TIME*, the *New York Times, The Washington Post, The New Yorker*, and other publications. He lives in Durham, North Carolina. Visit the author online at www.bartdehrman.com.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Thomas Fleischmann:

People live in this new day of lifestyle always make an effort to and must have the extra time or they will get lots of stress from both daily life and work. So , if we ask do people have time, we will say absolutely yes. People is human not just a robot. Then we ask again, what kind of activity have you got when the spare time coming to you of course your answer will unlimited right. Then do you try this one, reading publications. It can be your alternative in spending your spare time, the book you have read is Jesus Before the Gospels: How the Earliest Christians Remembered, Changed, and Invented Their Stories of the Savior.

Carissa Taylor:

Playing with family in a very park, coming to see the sea world or hanging out with friends is thing that usually you might have done when you have spare time, after that why you don't try matter that really opposite from that. One activity that make you not sensation tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you already been ride on and with addition of knowledge. Even you love Jesus Before the Gospels: How the Earliest Christians Remembered, Changed, and Invented Their Stories of the Savior, it is possible to enjoy both. It is fine combination right, you still desire to miss it? What kind of hang type is it? Oh can occur its mind hangout guys. What? Still don't understand it, oh come on its identified as reading friends.

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