



Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels

By Craig A. Evans



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Modern historical study of the Gospels seems to give us a new portrait of Jesus every spring--just in time for Easter. The more unusual the portrait, the more it departs from the traditional view of Jesus, the more attention it gets in the popular media. Why are scholars so prone to fabricate a new Jesus? Why is the public so eager to accept such claims without question? What methods and assumptions predispose scholars to distort the record? Is there a more sober approach to finding the real Jesus? Commenting on such recent releases as Bart Ehrman's *Misquoting Jesus*, James Tabor's *The Jesus Dynasty*, Michael Baigent's *The Jesus Papers* and the *Gospel of Judas*, for which he served as an advisory board member to the National Geographic Society, Craig Evans offers a sane approach to examining the sources for understanding the historical Jesus.

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Editorial Review

Review

. . . great value for evangelicals. Evans demonstrates that good scholarship is on the side of Scripture. (Richard A. Fordyce, Stone-Campbell Journal, Fall 2008)

"This is a work that can be given to a genuinely interested skeptic, and you will not be embarrassed. Recommended." (Samuel Lamerson, Journal of the Evangelical Theology Society, March 2008)

"Dr. Evans has done a formidable service to evangelical Christianity . . . [and] has ably championed the integrity of the original New Testament documents as reliable evidence of the traditional Historical Jesus." (Frank Z. Kovacs, Haddington House Journal, 2008)

"[A]s a resource to quickly find some responses to or literature on some bewildering issues in Jesus studies, this volume will prove very helpful." (Jack Barentsen in Criswell Theological Review, Spring 2008)

"*Fabricating Jesus* is an excellent resource for basic information about the texts, issues and major players in the historical Jesus debate." (Juan Hernandez Jr. for Religious Studies Review, April 2007)

"In this book, aimed primarily at a nonspecialist audience, Craig A. Evans intends to show that traditional views about the Gospels and Jesus are historically well founded. Evans brings his considerable expertise to bear on a wide variety of topics." (Daniel A. Smith for The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, January 2008)

"Overall, this work makes a major contribution to historical Jesus studies." (Christian Apologetics Journal, Summer 2007)

"In the genre of conservative evangelical responses to *The Da Vinci Code* and the Jesus Seminar, *Fabricating Jesus* stands out as a generously civil yet firm critique of the way some scholars distort Jesus." (Perspectives on Science & Christian Faith, June 2007)

"[This book] is a timely, succinct, and well-written guide for those perplexed by this subject that is much in the news these days. In this wide-ranging book Evans covers numerous contemporary and perennial academic topics related to the historical Jesus." (On Mission, Fall 2007)

"This thorough, well-written book debunks a number of serious but widespread and influential misinterpretations of the New Testament Gospels, and thus provides an invaluable service." (CHOICE, September 2007)

"*Fabricating Jesus* is yet another resource from Evans to help our generation wrestle with the challenges of radical skepticism." (Scott Lamb, Providence Baptist Church, St. Louis, Missouri, The Pathway, April 13, 2007, <http://www.mbcpathway.com/article70162.htm>)

"*Fabricating Jesus* exposes the misinformed nonsense that has confused the reading public over the past few years. Craig Evans is a well-read and thoughtful scholar who knows all the ancient texts. In this well-written book, he exposes the misguided assumptions and dubious sources that lie behind the wild theories that have plagued the public. He has also presented Jesus and the Gospels in their proper historical context. With

enthusiasm, I recommend this book for scholars and all interested in Jesus and Christian origins." (James H. Charlesworth, George L. Collord Professor of New Testament Language and Literature, Princeton Theological Seminary, and Director and Editor of the PTS Dead Sea Scrolls Project; author of *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls* and *The Beloved Disciple*)

"Few scholarly debates are more controversial or more vulnerable to distorted views from right and left than the discussion about the historical Jesus. The increased attention given to extracanonical texts such as the recently published *Gospel of Judas* and even the fictional vapors of *The Da Vinci Code* can seem in the eye of the casual reader to put the historical and theological credibility of the New Testament materials themselves in question. That is why Craig Evans's thoughtful, well-informed and balanced review of the debate is so welcome. *Fabricating Jesus* is not a reaction to modern biblical scholarship but a judicious guide through the evidence--and a fair-minded and careful assessment of how scholars have dealt with it." (Donald Senior, President and Professor of New Testament, Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, and author of *Jesus: A Gospel Portrait*)

"Craig Evans has written a necessary book on historical Jesus research. His book is exemplary for a 'conservative enlightenment.' It is aptly critical as scholarship--but it is also critical of sensational modern approaches in Jesus research that do not live up to the standards of academic research. In this well-written, lucid book, Evans informs readers of exciting new developments in Jesus research which outdate some hypotheses that were once in vogue. He knows academic scholarship from within--and also the very human aspects of all those who are engaged in Jesus research. So it is not only a very good scholarly book, but also a noble and fair book." (Gerd Theissen, Professor of New Testament Theology, University of Heidelberg, and author of *The Shadow of the Galilean* and *The Gospels in Context*)

"This book belongs with the excellent work Craig Evans has already published on the historical Jesus. Professor Evans consistently uses evidence in a truly scholarly and properly balanced manner to reach convincing conclusions--so different from some sensationalist claims about Jesus that quickly turn out to be based on mere wishful thinking. This is contemporary Gospel apologetics at its very best." (Gerald O'Collins, S.J., Professor of Theology Emeritus, Gregorian University (Rome), and author of *Jesus Our Redeemer*)

"In *Fabricating Jesus*, we have one of the greatest talents in biblical studies applying his skills to one of the biggest problems in popular culture--the eclipse of the true Jesus, to whom history gives abundant witness. Craig Evans does a masterful job of exposing the sort of tabloid scholarship that captures headlines and confuses the general public. He returns us to the clear-headed analysis of genuine historical inquiry, demonstrating the reasonableness of the Gospel accounts. This book will clarify matters for ordinary readers, yet satisfy scholars too." (Scott Hahn, Professor of Theology and Scripture, Franciscan University of Steubenville)

"Craig Evans is a prolific and distinguished scholar whose many books and articles are well known to his colleagues in the academy. *Fabricating Jesus* adds another fine work to the list of his accomplishments. For decades now, the unsuspecting American public has been subjected to dubious academic claims about the historical Jesus that hardly rise above the level of sensationalistic novels. In particular, the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas* has been misused as a privileged route to the historical Jesus, when in fact it is an interesting and valuable source for knowledge of the patristic period. Especially in regard to the *Gospel of Thomas*, Professor Evans's arguments against the misuse of apocryphal Gospels are especially cogent. This book is a healthful antidote to a great deal of what claims to be the quest for the historical Jesus in the United States today." (John P. Meier, William K. Warren Foundation Professor of Theology, University of Notre Dame, and author of the multivolume work on the historical Jesus titled *A Marginal Jew*)

"Many recent studies of Jesus are arguing that evidence requires a Jesus redo. Some works are written by well-known academics, while others are written by less well-known authors. Enter Craig Evans, who has given his life to the historical study of Jesus. Mincing no words, he calls most of these efforts what they are-- fabrication. However, his tone is irenic, the style is accessible, his argumentation is sound, and his scope is comprehensive. This book is a necessary exposé of many recent works, taking us from the hype to the historical Jesus. Eminently qualified, Evans has done us all a great service." (Darrell Bock, Research Professor of New Testament Studies, Dallas Theological Seminary, and author of *The Missing Gospels*)

"Craig Evans is well-known in academic circles for his expertise in Judaism and the history of early Christianity. In this new book he brings a refreshing mixture of scholarly erudition and critical common sense to an evaluation of the various documents that have been thought to undermine the credibility of the New Testament and demonstrates convincingly that they cannot bear the burden of proof that has been placed upon them. Such documents as the *Gospels of Thomas* and *Peter* have no significant new light to shed on the historical Jesus. At a time when much baseless fiction is being developed by novelists on the basis of such dubious sources, it is good to have this exposé of just how fictitious such writings are." (I. Howard Marshall, Honorary Research Professor of New Testament, University of Aberdeen, and author of *I Believe in the Historical Jesus* and *The Origins of New Testament Christology*)

"This powerful and persuasive book is a much-needed antidote to the outrageous distortions about Jesus and the Gospels that have been popularized in recent years. It's authoritative while still being accessible, and well-argued without being mean-spirited. I strongly recommend this outstanding resource to both Christians and spiritual seekers." (Lee Strobel, author of *The Case for Christ*)

"Few scholars are as well positioned, well trained and well informed as Craig Evans to critique the recent spate of books that have hit the stands, touting a new Jesus for a new day. In a scholarly world where almost anything can pass for knowledge of the historical Jesus or earliest Christianity no matter how far-fetched, it is comforting to have someone like Craig Evans as a sure guide through the maze of books on Jesus and supposedly lost Christianities. *Fabricating Jesus* is simply the best and most well informed popular-level book ever written on the Gnostic and apocryphal Gospels, as well as on a host of other early traditions that in some way touch on the story of Jesus. Along the way, Evans also provides us with a sane and sober reconstruction of Jesus and his aims and the history of earliest Christianity. I hope this book will gain the wide audience it so richly deserves." (Ben Witherington III, Professor of New Testament, Asbury Theological Seminary, and author of *The Jesus Quest* and *What Have They Done with Jesus?*)

"The quest of the historical Jesus has been seriously misled by much poor scholarship and distorted almost beyond recognition by recent pseudoscholarship. But now Craig Evans out-skeptics the historical skeptics, demonstrating from his own intimate familiarity with the biblical texts and his mastery of ancient sources how unfounded are many of the claims made and how ridiculously bizarre are the hypotheses thought to give some support to *The Da Vinci Code* and its like. The mature judgment of such an accomplished and front-rank scholar cannot be ignored or lightly gainsaid--a welcome draft from a clear spring after all the muddied waters of recent years." (James D. G. Dunn, Lightfoot Professor of Divinity Emeritus, University of Durham, and author of *Jesus Remembered* and *Christology in the Making*)

Review

"*Fabricating Jesus* exposes the misinformed nonsense that has confused the reading public over the past few years. Craig Evans is a well-read and thoughtful scholar who knows all the ancient texts. In this well-written book, he exposes the misguided assumptions and dubious sources that lie behind the wild theories that have plagued the public. He has also presented Jesus and the Gospels in their proper historical context. With enthusiasm, I recommend this book for scholars and all interested in Jesus and Christian origins."

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Angela Jones:

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Susan Padgett:

This Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels book is not ordinary book, you have after that it the world is in your hands. The benefit you get by reading this book will be information inside this reserve incredible fresh, you will get data which is getting deeper a person read a lot of information you will get. This specific Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels without we recognize teach the one who studying it become critical in pondering and analyzing. Don't possibly be worry Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels can bring once you are and not make your tote space or bookshelves' turn into full because you can have it inside your lovely laptop even mobile phone. This Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels having excellent arrangement in word along with layout, so you will not feel uninterested in reading.

Paul Andrews:

Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels can be one of your nice books that are good idea. We recommend that straight away because this guide has good vocabulary which could increase your knowledge in language, easy to understand, bit entertaining but delivering the information. The copy writer giving his/her effort that will put every word into pleasure arrangement in writing Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels although doesn't forget the main position, giving the reader the hottest and also based confirm resource info that maybe you can be certainly one of it. This great information can drawn you into brand new stage of crucial thinking.

Dolores Crook:

What is your hobby? Have you heard that question when you got college students? We believe that that query was given by teacher with their students. Many kinds of hobby, Every person has different hobby. And you know that little person just like reading or as examining become their hobby. You need to know that reading is very important and also book as to be the thing. Book is important thing to incorporate you knowledge, except your own teacher or lecturer. You will find good news or update about something by book. A substantial number of sorts of books that can you choose to adopt be your object. One of them is Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels.

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