

# Key Events in the Life of the Historical Jesus

Edited by  
DARRELL L. BOCK  
and ROBERT L. WEBB

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# Key Events in the Life of the Historical Jesus

A Collaborative Exploration of Context  
and Coherence

Edited by

Darrell L. Bock and Robert L. Webb

Mohr Siebeck

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## Preface

When you work on a project that has spanned more than a decade from start to finish, you never are sure if you will see the end. But in this instance it is not a negative thing, for the meetings of the IBR Jesus Group have been a pleasure from start to finish. Our participants come from three continents, and though separated by geographical distance, close relationships have been built, and friendships have been deepened as a result of our annual gatherings. Our meetings were marked by lively conversation about Jesus, Second Temple Judaism and historical method. But these times also included wonderful snacks as we worked (M&Ms, cake, cookies, and chips) as well as marvelous evening meals out to close our meetings. The closing meal each year became a traditional adjournment to our time together. Nothing quite equals a Brazilian steak house to a bunch of hungry scholars!

We mention this closing meal in particular because of our gratitude to Joe Head, who hosted our annual final meal as well as underwrote, through Bible.org, our annual meetings. His interest in our project has never waned from day one. He has always asked about our progress and cheered us on as we reported our progress each year.

We also want to thank our wives for being willing to join us on two of the occasions in Tübingen and Jerusalem (not bad!), as well as being willing to let us travel away the other times. Their encouragement and support was steadfast and unrelenting throughout the entire project. We thank them!

Finally, special thanks must go to Michael Burer, who volunteered to oversee the production of the final manuscript by making the footnote references consistent stylistically, generating the bibliographies, as well as compiling the indices – and he did the job with a smile! We also appreciate the help of two students who assisted Michael in the indexing process: Curtis Lindsey and Trevor Tarpinian. We wish to acknowledge the use of the academic word-processing program, NotaBene, to make these tasks much easier.

Some people question whether anything meaningful can be accomplished in collaboration. This volume would never have been completed without it – and all the essays are stronger (and longer!) as a result. Those of us in the

IBR Jesus group have come to appreciate deeply the value that collegiality can bring to an academic exercise.

August 27, 2009

Darrell L. Bock  
Robert L. Webb

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## Chapter 1

# Introduction to Key Events and Actions in the Life of the Historical Jesus

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Co-Conveners of the IBR Jesus Group

The last three decades have seen a renewed interest in historical Jesus research that is marked by new approaches and methods, and which have resulted in an impressive array of new hypotheses.<sup>1</sup> Historical Jesus research is not only alive and well, it is also fascinatingly fruitful. One of the key gains

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<sup>1</sup> Historical Jesus research is frequently periodized into three quests, with these recent decades considered to be the “Third Quest” (a term coined by N. T. Wright in Stephen Neill and Tom Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament, 1861–1986* [2nd ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988], 379–403). However, recent discussion has suggested that this schema, while maybe helpful for introducing students to the labyrinth of historical Jesus studies, is too simplistic for scholarly work. For critical discussion, see the chapter, “Secularizing Jesus” in Dale C. Allison, Jr., *Resurrecting Jesus: The Earliest Christian Tradition and Its Interpreters* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 1–26, the chapter, “The ‘Third Quest’ for the Historical Jesus and the Criteria for Authenticity,” in Stanley E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals* (JSNTSup 191; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 28–62, and Fernando Bermejo Rubio, “The Fiction of the ‘Three Quests’: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Historiographical Paradigm,” *JSHJ* 7 (2009), forthcoming. One should also recall that in raising the emergence of a Third Quest, studies reflecting the “New” or “Second Quest” approaches have not ceased, so that however the schema is presented, today we have differing emphases in basic approach present side by side. There also has been a lively discussion on whether historical Jesus studies have any real value; see the contrasting approach of the essays by Dale C. Allison, Jr. and Francis Watson in Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Richard B. Hays, eds., *Seeking the Identity of Jesus: A Pilgrimage* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008). Allison questions the value of the criteria so central to much of our work, preferring the memory of the church and an appeal at a macro level to what he calls recurrent attestation. His questions about how the criteria function with small bits of material is worth pondering. However, he has argued that a coherent, macro portrait is possible and works with an approach that mirrors in many respects his appeal for a more macro concern. The twelve events we have selected all touch on some of the recurrent themes he wishes to affirm. Watson’s essay argues for a limited benefit, even necessity, to keeping attention on the historical Jesus in working with the mediated presentation of Jesus the four gospels give us. In the essay by Robert L. Webb in this volume (ch. 2, § 4.1), he proposes that the criteria are insufficient alone, and need to be seen as part of a larger historical method that involves both top-down and bottom-up approaches, of which the criteria form a contributing part.

of recent work has been the careful attention given to Jesus' Second Temple environment as well as an appreciation for how his actions and teaching were set in and addressed a Jewish context.

Precursors include the kind of work done by Joachim Jeremias,<sup>2</sup> who sought to be sure the Jewish roots of Jesus were not lost. George Caird insisted that the right place to start with Jesus was in a backdrop focused on Israel.<sup>3</sup> Martin Hengel also sought roots in the Jewish context, but not at the expense of Greco-Roman concerns, noting how intertwined Hellenism and Judaism had become by Jesus' time.<sup>4</sup>

The historical-Jesus studies presented during the past 30–40 years cover a wide spectrum of approaches. On the one hand we have the work of E. P. Sanders,<sup>5</sup> meticulously working through both a look at key events and themes, while also considering the thrust of Jesus' activity at a more macro-level. On the other, we can consider the approach of Ben Meyer,<sup>6</sup> whose effort concentrates on a synthesis developed out of interaction with key Jewish themes of the Second Temple period. Where Sanders sees a skeleton of events that can confidently be said to reflect Jesus, the other sees the ability to speak comfortably of the aims Jesus had, arguing for a much more rounded portrait. John Meier, in probably the most extensive recent attempt, has been involved in his effort for decades now with the key volumes pulling everything together still awaiting release.<sup>7</sup> His work is a meticulously detailed consideration of key figures and themes that develops a picture at a micro level of detail, while keeping an eye on the big picture. N. T. Wright also has a full study that defends a synthetic model focusing on Jesus speaking to an Israel still in spiritual exile as God returns to His people in victory through the work of Jesus.<sup>8</sup> More recently James D. G. Dunn and Martin Hengel have offered comprehensive accounts, with Dunn emphasizing the flexible nature of the tradition set more in an oral frame, while Hengel has sought to trace a Jesus who focused his presentation on his authority in some type of carefully framed messianic light.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus* (trans. John Bowden; New York: Scribner, 1971).

<sup>3</sup> G. B. Caird, *Jesus and the Jewish Nation* (Ethel M. Wood Lecture; London: Athlone, 1965).

<sup>4</sup> See his multiple studies on these themes.

<sup>5</sup> E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979).

<sup>7</sup> Volume 4 of his opus, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (4 vols.; ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1991–2009), was announced as our work was concluding, and this volume will only treat issues tied to Jesus and the Law, as well as the ethical teaching of Jesus.

<sup>8</sup> N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (vol. 2 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God*; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996).

<sup>9</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (vol. 1 of *Christianity in the Making*; Grand

Somewhere in the mix also belong studies that have not abandoned the concern for and emphasis on Hellenistic influence on the tradition, an approach that was a key element of some earlier works (sometimes associated with what was termed the “New Quest”) with its effort to sift out the historical Jesus from concerns of emerging church communities of the evangelists. John Dominic Crossan’s Jesus reflects the itinerant style of a teacher of wisdom more like a philosopher than any other ancient model, but he also works with an elaborate view of sources that treats all sources at a similar level in terms of historical impact.<sup>10</sup> He spends much valuable time thinking through how Jesus fits into a Hellenistic context, but with less interaction using Second Temple Jewish sources. While the Jesus Seminar made considerable use of Second Temple Jewish sources, they also often spent more time on setting the backdrop for the evangelists’ themes out of a Hellenistic context than in a discussion of Second Temple Jewish context. The Seminar came to view Jesus as primarily a teacher of wisdom and aphorisms.<sup>11</sup> This approach was challenged by those who saw Jesus calling Israel back to covenantal faithfulness in a movement that appealed to the need for restoration and looked to the realization of Jewish hopes. So, there has been lively debate on whether Jesus presented himself in a context of Jewish hope about the consummation, often called vaguely the eschatological hope, or whether he was fundamentally wedded to a presentation rooted in wisdom and ethical themes. Other key shorter, comprehensive studies across this spectrum include those by Dale Allison, Bart Ehrman, Paula Fredricksen, Scot McKnight, as well as from a Jewish perspective, including work by David Flusser and Géza Vermès.<sup>12</sup> These shorter studies also gave careful attention to Second Temple context and issues.

Yes, historical Jesus studies is alive and well, and has been for several decades. But it is also somewhat disturbing to observe the diversity in the range of Jesus portraits that have been proposed. Some suggest this diversity

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Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003–); Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, *Jesus und das Judentum* (vol. 1 of *Geschichte des frühen Christentums*; 4 vols.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007–).

<sup>10</sup> John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991).

<sup>11</sup> Robert W. Funk, et al., *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993).

<sup>12</sup> Dale C. Allison, Jr., *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998); Bart D. Ehrman, *Jesus, Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Paula Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews: A Jewish Life and the Emergence of Christianity* (New York: Knopf, 1999); Scot McKnight, *Jesus and His Death: Historiography, the Historical Jesus, and Atonement Theory* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2005); David Flusser, *Jesus* (2nd ed.; in collaboration with R. Steven Notley; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1997); Géza Vermès, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian’s Reading of the Gospels* (London: Collins, 1973).

shows the failure of the quest and its criteria, or at least points to its severe limitations.<sup>13</sup> It is often observed that in seeking to see the historical Jesus down the well of history, one may only be viewing one's own reflection.<sup>14</sup> One of the reasons for this diversity is the complex nature of the study and method itself.<sup>15</sup> It is in this context of both diverse method and debated historical backdrop that the present study emerged.

In the mid-nineteen nineties, Darrell Bock proposed to the Institute for Biblical Research that a team project, a true seminar, be undertaken to study the historical Jesus. Initial discussions took place with Robert Webb, and together we became the co-conveners of the group. We decided after two years of meeting together to proceed. Our plan was that this study group – made up of IBR members with expertise in historical Jesus studies – would work with standard historical-Jesus methods and criteria, and be rooted in a careful look at historiographical questions.<sup>16</sup>

The decision was made to focus our attention on exploring key events and activities in the life of Jesus which met two criteria: a strong case could be made for a judgment of high probability that the core event was historical, and that it was likely significant for understanding Jesus. The goal was to see the extent to which such a study of key events might provide an overall framework for understanding Jesus. Once these key events had been selected, each essay was to do three things: first, it was to set forth a case for the probable historicity of the event using the criteria for authenticity. The focus was to, first, establish the probable historicity of the event's core rather than concerning itself with all of the details. Second, explore the socio-cultural contextual information that contributes to understanding the event in its first-century context. Third, in light of this context, to consider the significance of the event for understanding Jesus. Thus, each study would have both macro and micro concerns, being both analytical and synthetic.

<sup>13</sup> So Dale C. Allison, Jr, "The Historians' Jesus and the Church," in *Seeking the Identity of Jesus: A Pilgrimage* (ed. Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Richard B. Hays; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 79–95, especially pp. 79–83.

<sup>14</sup> This observation is often attributed to Albert Schweitzer, but it actually is from George Tyrrell (*Christianity at the Cross-Roads* [1909; repr., London: Allen & Unwin, 1963], 49) who observes concerning Adolf Harnack's *Wesen des Christentums*, "[t]he Christ that Harnack sees, looking back through nineteen centuries of Catholic darkness, is only the reflection of a Liberal Protestant face, seen at the bottom of a deep well." This sometimes trite and frequently-cited view of Jesus studies risks ignoring the fact that people's views of Jesus can and do change as a result of their study. Participating in the discussion and opening oneself up to the hermeneutical spiral can lead to such reassessments.

<sup>15</sup> For discussion in this volume see ch. 2, § 2, which explores why multiple historical representations might be made, and that this is not necessarily a bad or deficient thing.

<sup>16</sup> Besides those who wrote the essays, the group had a few other participants from the IBR. Key among them was Michael H. Burer, who helped us get this manuscript into published form and produced the indices. For further description of the group in terms of historiography, see ch. 2, § 5.

The group would function by assigning each event to a participant who would write a rough draft of the essay. This was then distributed in advance to all members who would then meet to discuss the essay. Each essay was discussed for a full day – paragraph by paragraph and sometimes line by line. Some essays went through multiple drafts and were discussed again for an additional day in a subsequent year. The focus was to discuss the evidence and argumentation to ensure that they were as complete and sound as possible. The process involved extensive discussion and debate which helped to shape and strengthen each essay. Although the group has twelve members, in any given year participants in the discussion ranged from six to nine. Several members were there for a majority of the meetings, so that a line of continuity was maintained throughout our discussions. So in a very real sense this work reflects the input of the group. The collaborative learning experience was very stimulating. Each author, however, remains alone responsible for the views expressed in their particular essay. In other words, the author of each essay had the final call on its contents.

The announcement went out and our first meeting was held in Chicago in 1999. The final meeting was held in Jerusalem in the summer of 2008. In between was another meeting in Chicago, a midway meeting in Tübingen (2005), and the rest of the meetings in Dallas. What started out as the presentation of ten events expanded to address twelve: six in Jesus' earlier ministry at large and six associated with his key, climactic activity in Jerusalem. The first six events were: The baptism by John the Baptist, the exorcisms in relationship to the teaching on the kingdom of God, the choosing of the Twelve, the association with sinners, the Sabbath controversies, and Peter's declaration at Caesarea Philippi. The final six events were the entry into Jerusalem, the temple incident, the last supper, the examination by the Jewish leadership, the examination by Pilate including crucifixion, and the claim of resurrection through the empty tomb and appearance accounts. The studies you see before you are the product of the group's work. Among the team there are differences in particulars, but in general the synthesis set forth is one the team embraces as providing the most coherent understanding of what Jesus did as a historic figure.

Some years more than one event was examined in an elongated schedule for the annual meetings. Literally hours of conversation and interaction are behind each study, including being in the position of looking up primary material, if it was called for, and discussing it, something the advent of computers has made possible.

This published work begins with an essay by Robert L. Webb on history, historiography, and historical method that actually was composed at the end of our work together. This essay opens the book to set the direction of what we sought to do and the issues we consistently faced throughout our

meetings. It reflects discussions that regularly came up as individual events were considered and assessed. In other words, this essay was written at the end of our process; it was not written as a guideline at the beginning of it. As noted above, Jesus studies has generated many distinct portraits of Jesus. Webb's examination looks at method and the "forks in the road" choices such method faces, and as such it helps to explain how complex the pursuit of the historical Jesus is and why this variety exists. The essay also helps to show the limits of such an approach, given the nature of our data and our distance from it. This is why our portrait here should be seen as one attempt at putting pieces of a very complex puzzle together.

We write for an audience interested in historical Jesus study, both those who have engaged in it and those who want to get familiar with the range of discussion often tied to it. Such a study concentrates on what it thinks can be demonstrated in a corroborative manner about Jesus. All sources are available for consideration and each is sifted critically. By working with the criteria, our goal was to work with a method that is generally used in such study. We are quite aware that such methods have been subject to important critiques from all sides of the debate, but in many ways these are the best means we have to engage in such a sifting process. Webb's essay summarizes which criteria we used and how we tended to see their importance after we completed our study. It also places the criteria within a larger framework of broad historical method involving both a top-down and bottom-up approach.

The subsequent twelve essays focus on specific events, or in a few cases, key sets of events (i. e., exorcisms in relation to the Kingdom of God, Sabbath controversies, and table fellowship with sinners). A similar structure for the most part appears in each essay proceeding through three concerns: (1) the historicity of the core of the event, (2) the social-cultural contextual information that helps us understand the event, and (3) the significance of the event for understanding the life and ministry of Jesus. In most cases where an event reflects a series of such accounts, a choice was made of a particular event to make the case for the category in question as authentic. This allowed us to focus on the central issues tied to the category.

Darrell L. Bock also has written a concluding essay. This represents the attempt to present a case for the coherence of the portrait that these key events suggest. We think we have shown a compelling case for a path that makes sense for a Jesus rooted historically in the complex cultural backdrop of the Second Temple period. Our study has concentrated on the Jewish context for providing socio-cultural background, as it often sheds significant light on what Jesus was doing.

One of the points expressed consistently in our discussion is the importance of recognizing, taking into account, and making public one's horizon,

including one's biases and preunderstanding. Thus, we consider it important to say "where we are coming from" as a group. As the IBR Jesus Group, we are members of the Institute for Biblical Research, which is an academic society specifically for scholars whose disciplines are biblical studies: Hebrew Bible, New Testament and related fields. Its vision is to foster excellence in biblical studies, doing so within a faith commitment. Thus each of us has a commitment to the Christian faith. While some of us would call ourselves "Evangelical Christian," others might prefer "biblically orthodox Christian." Thus, while all are Christians, there is some diversity in our theological viewpoints.

Our hope is that these studies, along with a treatment of the twelve events' coherence, can add to the already vibrant discussion that has been a part of Jesus studies over the last several decades. We see four features of the work as making this study of particular value in assessing Jesus and presenting a portrait of him, not as a final word, but as an introduction to appreciating who Jesus was as an historic figure. These four features are: the group nature of the effort, the study's combining and balancing of analysis and synthesis, its attention to historiographic method and many details of the Second Temple context, along with the study's claim to set a trajectory for considering who Jesus was. These features, as well as the results, made this study a valuable exercise for the participants. We have learned much from one another in the process. So we offer this collection of essays forged in over a decade's reflection on the historical Jesus. Our hope is that our interpretation of these central events provides insight into the central themes of Jesus' life and his aims.

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## Chapter 2

# The Historical Enterprise and Historical Jesus Research

ROBERT L. WEBB

### 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

As historical Jesus research has evolved over the past two and half centuries, one of its basic defining characteristics has been to distinguish the “Christ of faith” from the “Jesus of history.” While simplistic, this truism nevertheless aids in clarifying what marks out historical Jesus research from that which preceded it. In the Middle Ages and before, discussion of Jesus was usually in terms that explored the theological significance of “Jesus Christ.” If there was any “historical” discussion, it was largely in terms of polemical debates between Christians and those of other faiths over the Christian claims concerning Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> The concern was primarily theological, with the twin authorities being the Bible and the Church. A distinction between the “Jesus of history” and the “Christ of faith” was irrelevant in light of this concern and inappropriate in the context of these authorities. This distinction in historical Jesus research was largely developed in association with the Enlightenment, which advocated the role of reason as the basis of authority over against tradition – the political tradition of the State and the religious tradition of the Bible and the Church. Many people today still make no such distinction – when sitting in the pew, it is enough to read the Gospels, for they provide theological answers to questions of faith. For others, however, the development of historical understanding that has arisen in our modern

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to the members of this collaborative project, I would also like to acknowledge the interaction with and suggestions from a number of others who were not members: Dale C. Allison, James G. Crossley, Philip R. Davies, Lee Martin McDonald, and William J. Webb. Recognizing the diversity of viewpoints represented by these other readers, it will be quite evident that they would not agree with everything in this essay. But I value and appreciate their interaction. It has also been an enjoyable and stimulating process to discuss these issues with my co-chair, Darrell Bock, through the innumerable versions of this essay. We have learned much from each other in the spirit of Prov 27:17.

<sup>2</sup> For examples of such early Christian apologists, see Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* (second century C.E.) and Origen, *Contra Celsus* (third century C.E.).

context leads to seeking historical answers to historical questions and thus to this distinction between the “Jesus of history” and the “Christ of faith.” One is not to be preferred over the other, for both the “Jesus of history” and the “Christ of faith” are equally legitimate subjects of inquiry, but they are using different means to provide answers to different questions.

Most historical Jesus research, while making this distinction, was pursued out of theological interest and was intended to lead to theological conclusions. While the past two and a half centuries have been a quest for the “historical” Jesus, historical Jesus research as a discipline has been in many respects a subset of biblical studies or theology rather than history – to this day a university course on “historical Jesus” is probably taught in a religious or theological studies department rather than the history or classics department. Recently, however, historical Jesus research has been developing a more explicitly historical focus: the larger disciplines of history and philosophy of history are having a greater impact, the cognate disciplines such as cultural anthropology and sociology are being drawn upon, and theologically-driven agendas are viewed as inappropriate to the explicitly historical enterprise of historical Jesus research.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter is intended to complement the accompanying essays in a couple of ways. First, taking the cue from recent historical Jesus studies, this chapter begins with the nature of history, historiography, and historical

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<sup>3</sup> The history of this past two and a half centuries of historical Jesus research (frequently called “the quest for the historical Jesus”) is often divided up into a number of phases. This recent shift to a more explicitly historical focus is often associated with what has been termed the “Third Quest.” There are numerous surveys of the history of historical Jesus research; for example, the classic discussion of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: First Complete Edition* (trans. W. Montgomery, et al.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), and for the first half of the twentieth century, see Walter P. Weaver, *The Historical Jesus in the Twentieth Century, 1900–1950* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999). For the latter half of the twentieth century, see Mark Allen Powell, *Jesus as a Figure in History: How Modern Historians View the Man from Galilee* (Louisville, KY: Westminster / John Knox, 1998). For a more complete bibliography of such historical surveys, see Craig A. Evans, *Life of Jesus Research: An Annotated Bibliography* (2 ed.; NTTTS 24; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996). Recently, however, this paradigm of the “three quests” has been called into question. For example, see Stanley E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals* (JSNTSup 191; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 28–62; Dale C. Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus: The Earliest Christian Tradition and Its Interpreters* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 1–26; Fernando Bermejo Rubio, “The Fiction of the ‘Three Quests’: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Historiographical Paradigm,” *JSHJ* 7 (2009): [forthcoming]. It should be noted that a distinction is made here between engaging in historical Jesus research with a theologically-driven agenda or focus, and engaging in it out of theological interest. There should be no problem if a historian has personal interests that lead to professional historical engagement in a research topic, but this interest must not lead to a bias in making historical judgments or providing historical explanations. Aspects of this issue are discussed further in §§ 2.3, 3, and 4 below.

method. Only when these larger issues are appreciated can one understand what historical Jesus research can and should be, and why it has faced some of the difficulties it has. Second, having established this larger context, only then do we turn to issues specific to historical Jesus research. Here I try to provide a road map to the some distinctives of this field. In particular, I identify some “forks in the road” which different scholars take with reference to issues in this field of research. These “forks” help to clarify some of the diversity which may be observed in historical Jesus studies today.

This chapter is intended to be an Introduction – and only that. Each of the sections below could be easily expanded to be a chapter or even a book in length. A cursory examination of the other chapters in this volume demonstrates that this could easily be done! The attempt at brevity in this Introduction is intended to provide the non-specialist reader a survey of some of the foundational principles of historical Jesus research, particularly those which are debated in the discipline today. And for fellow historical-Jesus scholars, this Introduction is intended to convey some of the principles that have guided this project, so that they can place it within the spectrum of this discipline.

It should be noted, however, that the discussions below represent my views on the subject, and they do not necessarily represent all members of this project.<sup>4</sup> We have discussed its contents extensively and they have contributed to shaping my thinking on these matters, but I remain responsible for its contents. It should be noted that this chapter was written at the conclusion of this project, and thus it explores issues that were raised at various points throughout the process, but it never functioned as the guide that preceded the project.

Given the length of this chapter, some guidance at the beginning may help you, the reader, to not get lost, and also so that, if you wish, you might jump ahead to the subjects that are of greater interest to you:

§ 2. Defining History, Historiography, and Historical Method: This section discusses what history is and how it is done. This may appear irrelevant, but these subjects provide the foundation for the historical enterprise. If you do skip ahead over this point, please do return here, for these issues are very important.

§ 3. Historical Explanation, Worldview, and the “Supernatural”: In most historical studies, the issues of worldview and the “supernatural” do not arise, but when turning to the subject of Jesus, it must be addressed. So this section provides a bridge between history in general (§ 2) and distinctives in historical Jesus studies (§ 4).

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<sup>4</sup> For a description of this project and its members, see the preceding “Introduction.” See also my own observations in the conclusion to this essay.