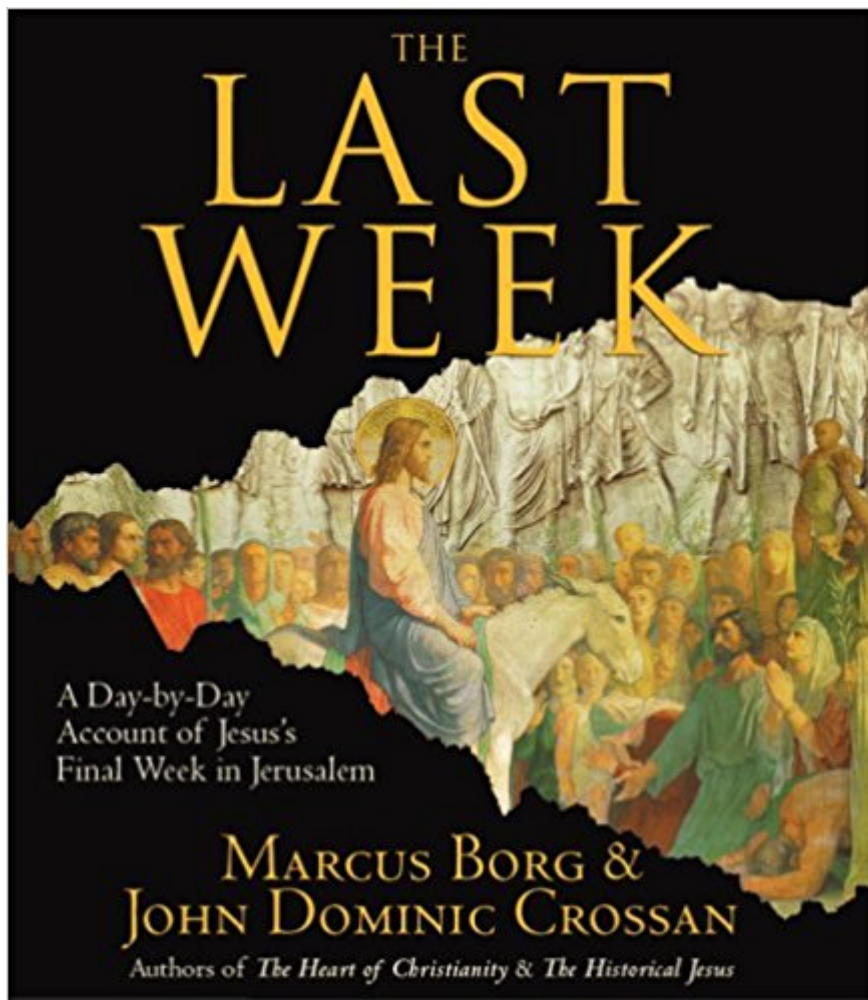




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# The Last Week



## Synopsis

Two top Jesus experts explore the last seven days of Jesus's life, from his triumphal entry into Jerusalem to his march to the cross. Their goal: To retell a story everyone thinks they know too well and most do not seem to know at all. Using the best of biblical and historical scholarship, bestselling authors and leading Jesus scholars Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan shed new light on Jesus's final days in Jerusalem, revealing their true significance in history and for faith. Rather than collapse Holy Week into its last three days, as Christian liturgy does, they use as their basis the gospel of Mark: a chronicle of Jesus's last week day-by-day and eventually hour-by-hour.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

**\*Starred Review\*** Taking Mark, the earliest Gospel, as their guide, Borg and Crossan "retell a story everyone thinks they know too well and most do not seem to know at all." So doing, they offer an alternative passion of the Christ, the primary feature of which is not suffering (Latin *passio*) but passion understood Anglophonically as "consuming interest, dedicated enthusiasm, or concentrated commitment." Jesus' passion was the kingdom of God declared in terms of God's justice, they say, and the fact that such declaration was seen, despite Jesus' nonviolence, as a threat to the system of domination by Rome and its wealthy Jewish collaborators led to his suffering. Borg and Crossan parse Mark's reportage (so to speak) on the days from Palm Sunday to Easter to demonstrate the challenges Jesus made to Roman and Herodian-temple rule. They point up Jesus' insistence on justice, especially equitable distribution of necessities, and such too-little-noticed matters as Jesus'

great popularity, attested by the crowds who hang on his words and his adversaries' fears of angering those crowds; so fearful are they that they must find a traitor, seize Jesus at night, and whisk him through the courts. Written with Crossan's scholarly scintillation rather than Borg's sometimes plodding earnestness, this is politically concerned analysis of Christianity at its best. Ray Olson

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"If there is one book for the redemption of Holy Week, this is it. A must read." (Peter J. Gomes, Harvard University)

"[...] Borg and Crossan show one of the most careful and insightful readings of the Bible I've ever come across." (Brian McLaren, author of A New Kind of Christian)

"It is difficult to overestimate the importance of this volume[...]" (Barbara Brown Taylor, author of Leaving Church and Preaching Life)

"These controversial Jesus Seminar scholars provide lots to ponder." (The Kansas City Star)

"Borg and Crossan brilliantly chronicle the tension that forced everyone to pledge allegiance -- either to Rome or to Jesus." (Los Angeles Times)

"A readable and attractive reinterpretation of Jesus's death and resurrection. . . ." (Houston Chronicle)

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excellent, easy to read. tells the story mostly from Mark's gospel, as Mark actually described events that happened each day of holy week from Palm Sunday's procession to Easter Sunday. and Mark was the first gospel written. from time to time, other gospels are compared and contrasted. The authors bring in history of the time plus the author's point of view. very interesting points made. will make you think. Mark portrays Jesus as continually reminding the followers that they are missing the point. he wants them to follow his "way," live the way he shows them, include all, show mercy, have fellowship with all. Mark also points out that the established government system of the day was a dominance system by the Romans and also the Jewish rulers who did as the Romans wished and together they kept the Jewish people poor and powerless. Jesus was in direct opposition to that dominance system. Jesus wanted justice and equity, the complete opposite of what was happening. and the government didn't like his comments which eventually got him killed. God had the last word though and said yes to Jesus' way with Easter and no to the dominance way. As the authors say you only thought you knew everything there was to know about Holy week. we bring to the story our own understandings from what we've heard or been taught when we were young. this book explains how Mark and the other gospel writers sometimes covered different parts of the story and somehow

we learned the combined story which wasn't ever combined by the authors who wrote the various versions of it. I want to read more by these authors.

Recommended by a friend, I read this before and during Holy Week. I am re-reading parts because even though on the first read-through, I learned a lot, I'm still not sure about some events of that week. It is a helpful back-up to our study groups on the New Testament. I now believe that everyone and everything is within the circle that is the Holy Spirit. Believing this, I've started praying for terrorists, that they hear the call to go home. I find myself treating others with more kindness. I'm still struggling with the crucifixion, what it means and if it is to be taken literally. My faith journey continues.

First, I am really enjoying this book. Why three stars? On the fly leaf of the book it is described as "What the Gospels teach..." And then in the opening chapters it is explained that we must lay aside the teachings of the other Gospels in order to let Mark speak and to interpret what he says with no presuppositions. My other reservation is (and I am not finished with the book), the authors seem to say that over time Christians have misinterpreted Jesus' true passion because of presuppositions accumulated over the ages of the Church and yet posit themselves as free from presuppositions that might color their own interpretations. Having said this I am enjoying the read and without saying I agree with their conclusions I entirely believe it to be a profitable book.

I wasn't impressed. The book is written for a popular audience. It is lacking the depth I had expected from these Jesus scholars. The authors state the thesis of the book: "Seeing the political meaning of Good Friday and Easter can help us to recover the political meaning of Jesus and the Bible as a whole." I prefer the third wave of historical Jesus research that places Jesus in his Jewish context so this second wave proposed by these authors seems outdated to me.

This is a terrific book and nothing short of perfect as a spiritual discipline during Holy Week. I chose to read each day's chapter on the appropriate day. It most certainly enhanced my journey through Holy Week and expanded my experience and celebration of Easter. Buy it. Read it. You'll be pleased and enriched.

Professor Both continues his discussion about the complete Jesus. A revolutionary figure filled with the Spirit and, by example and through his teaching, showing that there is a different and better

way to fulfillment.

Borg and Crossan have given us an account that follows daily events in the last week of Jesus' life as recorded in the gospel of Mark. One might expect these alumni of the Jesus Seminar to delve into which events are more likely to be historical; but that is completely foreign to their purpose, for they focus on explicating the meaning and significance of what Mark has to say. This is serious bible study that can appeal to the most literal-minded as well as the most liberal of readers. They begin their account by imagining that two demonstrations coincided on Palm Sunday. One was the entry of Pilate and the Roman legions at one gate of Jerusalem and the other was Jesus on a donkey at another gate. Jesus' entry, they maintain, was intended as a counter and a critique of the procession representing the "domination system" of the day - that is, the political and economic system backed by Romans and leading religious authorities. From his very arrival in Jerusalem, Jesus was letting it be known that he intended to take on leading political and religious authorities. This he did overtly on Monday with a demonstration in the temple which clearly forecast its destruction. Borg and Crossan highlight Mark's practice of "framing," that is, sandwiching one story between the beginning and ending of another story, to get across his literary point. For example, the story of the fig tree on Monday "frames" the story of the demonstration in the temple and helps to make clear that the dominant message of the action in the temple was to call for its destruction, as the fig tree had been destroyed, because it didn't produce fruit. They point to the fact that Mark uses framing several times to get his message across and to how Matthew and Luke tended to eliminate the Markan frames in telling their versions of the stories. One of the major themes emphasized by Borg and Crossan is that Mark does not interpret the death of Jesus as substitutionary sacrifice. Such a notion of atonement came about in later centuries, they argue. According to these authors, Mark saw Jesus' death as a challenge to his followers to participate with him in death and resurrection. From Caesarea Philippi onward, they maintain, Jesus told them: "They must pass through death to a new life here below upon this earth, and they can already see what that transformed life is like in Jesus himself." (p. 103) They point to failed discipleship as a theme in Mark. The woman who anoints Jesus' feet is the one person who does not fail to get his message, making her "the first believer" and the chief example of the model leader Jesus described. (p. 104) The treachery of Judas, in their view, was just one more of the failures of the disciples. The one point where they could not avoid the issue of factuality was the occurrence of Easter. They state very clearly that Jesus would have been forgotten without Easter. But did the resurrection happen? They avoid the question by pointing to the parabolic meaning of the appearance stories, which is to say

that the meaning of the stories is what seems to them to be the most important issue. Their approach is to "highlight their meaning as parable, as truth-filled stories, without any intrinsic denial of their factuality." (p. 194) Nevertheless, they seem to point to appearance stories as examples of visions, which, they say, may be truthful and not just hallucinations. Readers of this book will come away with a new appreciation for the gospel of Mark and new insights into the central message of Jesus. Borg and Crossan have written a very readable and remarkably short book that deserves attention from any serious student of the bible.

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