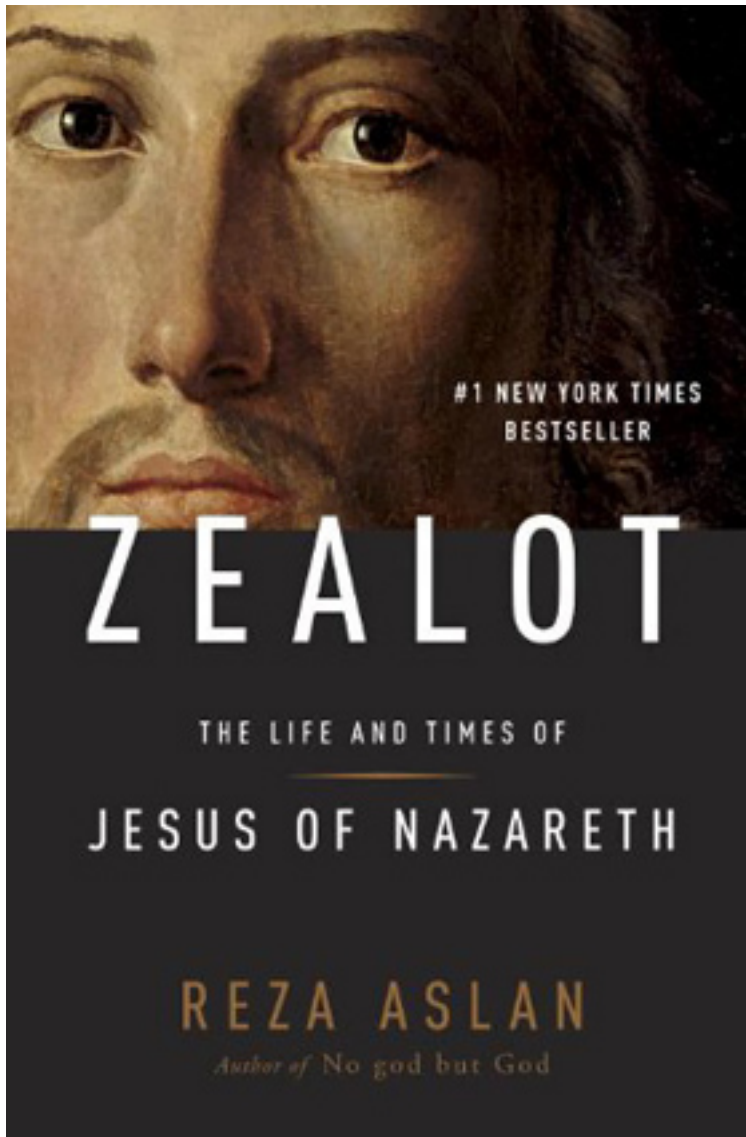


Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth

Written by Kam Williams



by Reza Aslan

Random House

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334 pages

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"This book is an attempt to reclaim, as much as possible, the Jesus of history, the Jesus of Christianity... whose mission failed when... he was arrested and executed by Rome for the crime of sedition.

The Jesus that is uncovered... certainly will not be the Jesus that most modern Christians would recognize but... is the only Jesus we can access...

He was a man of profound contradictions, one day preaching a message of racial exclusion, the next, of benevolent universalism; sometimes calling for unconditional peace, sometimes promoting violence and conflict."

-- Excerpted from Introduction (pages xxiv-xxxi)

Was Jesus Christ really God or merely a charlatan, and just one of the countless "false messiahs" who "tramped through the holy Land delivering messages of God's imminent judgment" during the 1st Century? That is the central question addressed by *Zealot*, a controversial biography by Reza Aslan.

Thanks to a contentious interview with the author on Fox News Television that went viral, the incendiary opus was catapulted to #1 spot on the New York Times best-seller list. On the show, Dr. Aslan promoted himself as a Professor of Religion in order to deflect suspicion that he might have an anti-Christian agenda.

Truth be told, he actually only teaches Creative Writing at UC Riverside. And his credentials are also suspect, since his Ph.D. is in Sociology. So, it only makes sense to approach this self-appointed expert on the life of Jesus with a healthy skepticism, especially when you factor in that he was born a Muslim, converted to Christianity as a teenager, and then back to Islam five years later. As for *Zealot*, the book is basically a work of speculative fiction which attempts to knock Jesus off his pedestal. The author does so by asserting that the Prince of Peace was a hypocrite who talked out of both sides of his mouth, such as in Matthew 10:34 where he's quoted as saying "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on Earth. I have not come to bring peace, but the sword."

Dr. Aslan's mission is to differentiate between the mythologized Jesus and the one who walked among us a couple of millennia ago. His point is that there were plenty of street corner prophets standing on soapboxes back then, and Christ was a failure by any measure.

Thus, he concludes that faith is the only way anyone in their right mind might see Jesus as a divinity. A fresh, if blasphemous, take on the greatest story ever told.

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