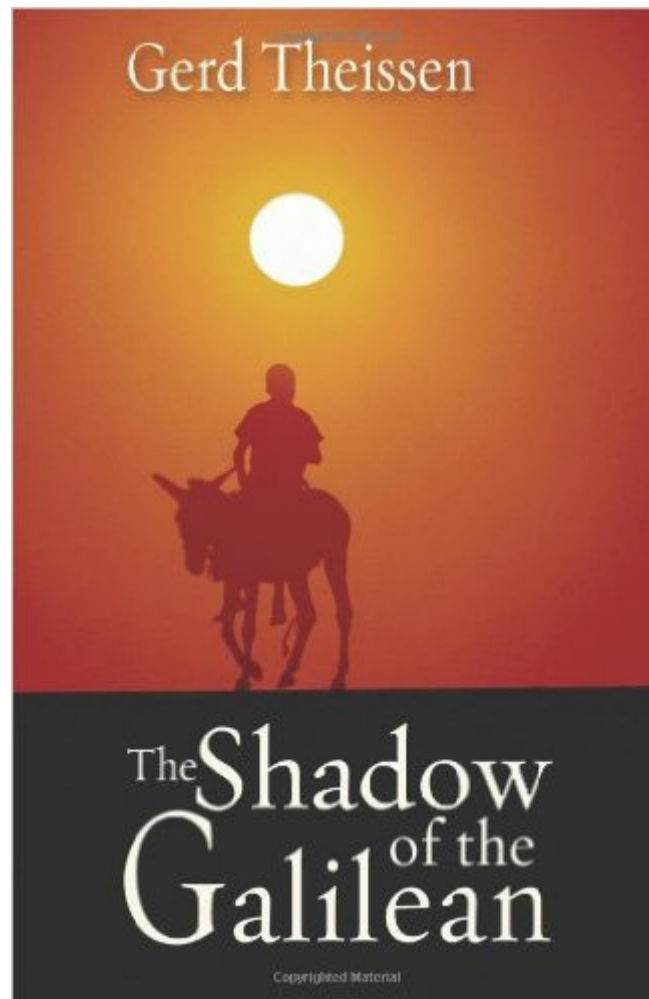


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The Shadow Of The Galilean: The Quest Of The Historical Jesus In Narrative Form



Synopsis

First published in 1987 by Fortress Press, this 20th anniversary edition of this classic bestseller includes a new Afterword from the author. Here, in narrative form, is an account of the activity of Jesus of Nazareth, scrupulously constructed so that it does not undercut the insights of New Testament scholarship. What makes it different from other such attempts is that Jesus never actually appears. What we find everywhere is his shadow, his effect. Such an approach avoids the usual pitfalls of the genre and lends this story - attributed to a fictitious narrator - an attraction, freshness, and power all its own. Tension and interest are maintained to the end, even for those sated with books about Jesus. Careful documentation in the footnotes shows how much of the narrative is based on ancient sources.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In his historical novel *The Shadow of the Galilean*, Gerd Theissen attempts to recreate in narrative form both the historical world of first century Judea as well as the modern quest for the historical Jesus. By taking the available primary sources which enlighten for us this period of history, Theissen aims to reproduce, through his fictional protagonist, Andreas, the atmosphere and milieu of a first century Jew and the influence of Jesus of Nazareth on the Judean region during this time. Theissen relies heavily on the New Testament (NT) synoptic gospels in his recreation, citing them and alluding to them in detail as he develops his story. He does in fact treat them historically (to a certain extent), employing their materials liberally to inform Andreas - and thus the reader - on

the details of Jesus' teachings and doings. Theissen also demonstrates the occurrence of a very early oral tradition of Jesus' teaching and its dissemination throughout the Judean communities, as Andreas learns of Jesus' parables and philosophy through verbatim second-hand accounts from others he encounters. However, very little is taken from the fourth NT gospel (John). Since Theissen clearly demonstrates the historical relevancy of the NT materials for his recreation, the lack of inclusion of the Johannine account is no accident. Hence, he reveals his ahistorical interpretation of the fourth NT gospel; thus, according to Theissen, it can be ignored and is irrelevant in establishing a historical picture of Jesus the Galilean. The reader also notices that Theissen omits significant miraculous elements from this NT story of the historical Jesus. There is no mention of the geographic and cosmic events subsequent to the death of Jesus (earthquake: Mt 27.51, 54; and eclipse: Mt 27.45; Mk 15).

I thoroughly enjoyed *Shadow of the Galilean*. This book represented an engaging story that was able to provide a great deal of historical and cultural information without any of the dryness that plagues so many treatments of the historical Christ. One of my favorite features of the book was the author's ongoing dialogue with his imaginary friend and colleague "Dr. Kratzinger." While a fictional person, this feature provided an excellent way to stop and assess the information given in each chapter from a scholarly and critical perspective. I also thoroughly enjoyed the way this book emphasized the complex historical canvas that Jesus was thrust upon. Whenever I hear the stories of Jesus, I often find myself slipping into thinking that the Jesus movement was a relatively isolated incident. This book reminded me that Jesus' ministry occurred in a time of great political and religious unrest. I had never before thought about what effect Jesus' teachings might have on a populace who already had been exposed to other "messiahs," as well as a variety of uprisings and insurrections against Roman authority. Several things from the book especially jumped out at me. For instance, the idea that many of Jesus' teachings, such as leaving your family to follow him, would be considered repulsive to many. The fact that the character Andreas found many qualities about Jesus to be unattractive was very thought provoking. Another insight was that the Centurion whom Jesus declared had great faith may have been a homosexual, which would have disgusted many Jewish religious leaders. Andreas' classification of Jesus as a philosopher, poet, and prophet was also interesting, because it made me think about Jesus' character in a way that I had not done so before.

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