

Killing Jesus Study Guide

Killing Jesus by Bill O'Reilly and Martin Dugard

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| Killing Jesus Study Guide..... | 1 |
| Contents..... | 2 |
| Plot Summary..... | 3 |
| A Note to Readers & Chapter 1..... | 5 |
| Chapter 2..... | 8 |
| Chapters 3 & 4..... | 10 |
| Chapter 5..... | 12 |
| Chapters 6 & 7..... | 14 |
| Chapter 8..... | 17 |
| Chapter 9..... | 20 |
| Chapter 10..... | 23 |
| Chapter 11..... | 26 |
| Chapters 12 & 13..... | 29 |
| Chapters 14 & 15..... | 32 |
| Chapter 16..... | 35 |
| Chapter 17..... | 38 |
| Chapters 18 & 19..... | 41 |
| Chapter 20-21, Afterword & Postscript..... | 44 |
| Characters..... | 47 |
| Symbols and Symbolism..... | 51 |
| Settings..... | 54 |
| Themes and Motifs..... | 56 |
| Styles..... | 59 |
| Quotes..... | 61 |



Plot Summary

"Killing Jesus" by Bill O'Reilly and Martin Dugard claims to be a historical account of the life and death of Jesus Christ. Explaining the atmosphere into which Jesus was born in terms of the conflict between Rome and the Jews, the authors follow Jesus's life and teachings until his crucifixion, taking great care to explain the reasons that he was persecuted and also how his teachings have made him the most popular man in the world. "Killing Jesus" is an informative retelling of the classic story that sparked the Christian religion.

Learning that a baby boy destined to be the King of the Jews has been born in Bethlehem, Herod the Great orders the deaths of all baby boys, but fortunately, Joseph has a vision of the impending slaughter and escapes with Mary and Jesus in the middle of the night. Years earlier, after Julius Caesar was betrayed and murdered, civil war broke out in Rome, ending with Octavian being named the undisputed heir.

When Jesus is twelve years old, his parents realize he is missing from their caravan as they return home from celebrating Passover in Jerusalem, and they find him teaching in his "Father's house" to scholars who are amazed at his understanding of complex religious subjects. While Jesus enjoys a nice childhood, the Jews' outrage against Rome grows, and by age 30, Jesus realizes that silence is no longer an option, though his decision will change the world and lead to his death. As John the Baptist preaches about the messiah coming, he recognizes Jesus as the Son of God when a dove lands on Jesus's shoulder. Unfortunately, John the Baptist is arrested for offending Herod Antipas and his wife, and with Tiberius being the licentious Roman Emperor, the Jews receive little justice so they begin looking for a savior.

In the Temple in AD 27, Jesus overturns the money changers' tables and chases off the sacrificial animals being sold in anger at those who turn his Father's house into a market. He vows to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days; thus, Jesus begins traveling and teaching, gaining followers by performing miracles throughout Judea. He summons twelve disciples to learn his message and preach in his stead one day, and he encourages the oppressed Galileans when he preaches the Sermon on the Mount. When a Pharisee tries to trick Jesus by introducing him to a prostitute, Jesus forgives Mary Magdalene because of her love, and she becomes a follower of Jesus also. Herod Antipas orders the execution of John the Baptist in exchange for a favor from his stepdaughter, Salome.

Though the Jewish and Roman authorities begin to view Jesus as a threat, they leave him alone because his message is peaceful, but Jesus's disciples, especially Judas, worry about their positions as Jesus provokes these leaders. After Jesus raises Lazarus from the grave, the priests fear an uprising, and Caiaphas begins plotting against Jesus. In 30 AD, Jesus enters Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, fulfilling prophecy about the messiah, and this causes Caiaphas to determine that Jesus is a false prophet who must be eliminated. The priests try in vain to trap Jesus in blasphemy, but he is too smart for them. Caiaphas finds unexpected help in his plot to arrest Jesus when Judas, fearful of



Jesus's predictions about dying and his disciples being persecuted, agrees to betray his leader in exchange for 30 silver coins.

During the Last Supper, Jesus predicts that one of his twelve disciples will betray him shortly before Judas rushes off to Caiaphas. After praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus submits to his arrest as Judas betrays him with a kiss. In custody, Jesus is interrogated illegally and beaten viciously by the Temple guards until, at last, they convict him of blasphemy and condemn him to death when he agrees he is the Son of God. Pontius Pilate and Herod Antipas both refuse custody, and when Pilate is forced to accept custody of Jesus, he offers to release the Christ to the Jews for Passover; however, the Jews request Barabbas, a murderer, instead, so Jesus is scourged, crowned with thorns and mocked as the King of Jews. Though Pilate plans to release Jesus after his punishment, the Jewish priests demand his death, so Pilate washes his hands of the arrangement.

Jesus is led to Golgotha where he is nailed to a cross and dies at age 36. He is removed from the cross and buried in a tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea, but three days later, the tomb is found empty, and his body is never recovered. Over the next 40 days, Jesus Christ is said to have appeared twelve times before ascending into Heaven. His disciples preach his message throughout the world, and many are martyred. Indisputably, Jesus is the most famous person in the world, and his message reaches billions of people over the next 2000 years.



A Note to Readers & Chapter 1

Summary

In A Note to Readers, the author, Bill O'Reilly, notes that it is trite to claim Jesus was the most influential man to ever live since 2000 years after his execution, 2.2 billion people believe that he was the Son of God and his teachings has played a large role in shaping the world. There is much debate about his life since the four Gospels are often contradictory, but the authors of "Killing Jesus" do their best to fill in the gaps, admitting a lack of knowledge when necessary. Records of the time were well kept, but Jesus was not the focus of much attention until near the end of his life.

The book is not religious and instead strives to show Jesus as a man who evoked enemies while preaching about love. It is also important to understand the atmosphere at the time; Rome dominated, human life was little valued, and there was oppression and persecution of those who thought differently than the political leaders. Jesus preached salvation through God, offending these leaders who taught that salvation was found only through themselves. These men finally succeeded in silencing Jesus through execution, and the goal of this novel is to tell the story of the lethal struggle between good and evil.

Beginning Book 1: The World of Jesus, Chapter 1 begins in Bethlehem, Judea on a March morning in 5 B.C. as soldiers from Jerusalem march on the town in search of a baby boy who they have been ordered to kill. His crime is that some believe he will be the next King of the Jews, and Herod, the current monarch, is intent on the infant's death, so he orders the death of all baby boys in the vicinity since they do not know who this future king has been born to; he is the son of Mary and her husband, Joseph, a carpenter. In Jerusalem, Herod awaits news of the infant's death, frightened by warnings of the new king of whom he was first informed by three Magi as they sought the child. Though he orders the Magi to return and tell him the child's location so he can also worship him, the Magi do not return because they see through his deceit.

As time passes, Herod must take action, but he is unaware that Jesus has already visited the Temple, which can be seen from Herod's window, twice with his parents. Furthermore, on Jesus's second visit, two strangers predicated the important role Jesus will play in freeing the Jews from Roman rule. All Herod knows is that he will be held accountable for any problems that this infant king may cause, so he has no guilty conscience as he orders the child's death. Fortunately, Joseph has a vision of the slaughters, so he flees in the middle of the night with Mary and Jesus. Many prophecies predict the trials and tribulations that Jesus will endure, but for now, he is only an infant, fleeing the cruelties of Herod and the Roman Empire.



Analysis

"Killing Jesus" opens with A Note to Readers in which author Bill O'Reilly explains that the goal of the novel is to provide a historical account of Jesus Christ, the most influential man that ever lived.

Book 1: The World of Jesus then begins with Chapter 1, set in Bethlehem in March of the year 5 BC. Fearful at the Magis' news that the next King of the Jews has been born, Herod sends soldiers to slaughter all male infants since he does not know which is the new king. Though the soldiers are aware of Herod's cruelty, there is no debate about the morality of slaughtering infants, lest they risk death for insubordination; what matters most is one simple fact: king of the Jews or not, the infant must die" (page 11).

Herod is old and infirm, and while he has learned to live with his pains, he fears the new king whose coming has been predicted by Jewish prophets for centuries. There are five occurrences prophesied to occur to confirm the birth of the messiah, all of which are present when Jesus is born, and these are as follows: a great star rises, born in Bethlehem, a descendent of David, born to a virgin, and powerful men from afar will worship him. Herod knows the first two are true, but he does not know that the child's name is Jesus, meaning "the Lord is salvation".

Herod is also unaware that Jesus has already twice visited the Temple, visible from Herod's window, in order to be circumcised and then presented to God. On that second visit, two strangers were drawn to the boy, Simeon who predicted Jesus will be the fall and rise of many in Israel and Anna, an 84-year-old prophetess who predicts the child will free Jerusalem from Roman rule. Knowing that Rome will hold him accountable for any problems that arise from this new King of the Jews, Herod feels no guilt as he does what must be done. There are many prophesies about Jesus, but for now, he is only an infant, on the run from Herod and the Roman Empire, thanks to a dream Joseph has that inspires him to flee Bethlehem with Jesus and Mary.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Bill O'Reilly claim that Jesus Christ was the most influential man who ever lived?

Discussion Question 2

Describe the political/social atmosphere into which Jesus was born.

Discussion Question 3

Why does Herod the Great order the deaths of all baby boys born in Bethlehem shortly after Jesus's birth?



Vocabulary

influential, contentious, visage, mercenaries, penchant, notorious, incessant, meticulous, citadel, dissipated



Chapter 2

Summary

On March 15, 44BC, it is 11 a.m. in Rome as dictator Julius Caesar is conveyed to his meeting with the Roman Senate with only an hour to live, and while he is concerned by rumors of his death, he has no clue how imminent it is. Caesar is the most powerful man in the world, and though he indulged his wife, Calpurnia's, fears and canceled the meeting with the Senate, his great general Decimus Brutus convinced him to ignore his wife's fears by insinuating he will be named King of Rome before he leaves to subjugate the Parthians. Disregarding another soothsayer's warning, Caesar steps from the litter to join the Senate, hopeful of being pronounced King. Instead, assassins await Caesar's arrival, and among these are some of his closest friends and allies who fear his growing power.

This is not the first time that someone has wanted Caesar dead; he has endured many challenges to become successful, but he has also committed many offenses in war which are too much even for the bloodthirsty Senate. His crimes against Germanic tribes in 55 BC led to a civil war in Italy, the first world war in history, when Caesar entered Rome with his troops after being summoned for trial. Pompey fled to Egypt where he was murdered, but four years of conflict followed before Caesar won. Disgusted by the Egyptians violence against Pompey since he had planned leniency, Caesar becomes involved in Egypt's civil war in hopes of restoring the throne to the overthrown Cleopatra with whom he begins a love affair, resulting in a child born on June 23, 47 BC who is named Caesarion.

Though Caesar has no heir, he does not name his son as his heir; his declared heir is his nephew, Octavian. Knowing that if her relationship with Caesar ends, she will lose Egypt and also knowing that he will need a royal born queen if he becomes king, Cleopatra pushes Caesar to accept the Roman crown, and the plan progresses perfectly until the Ides of March. As Caesar joins the Senators, they surround him and aggressively kiss him, attacking and stabbing him dozens of times as he looks on in shock at the faces of his friends. As Caesar tries to fight back, Marcus Brutus delivers a fatal blow to his groin, and Caesar dies.

Analysis

The second chapter of this novel explores a time decades before the birth of Jesus, 44 BC, in order to examine the atmosphere into which he is born and to explain how the Roman Empire has become so strong. It focuses on the actions of Julius Caesar who has recently been named dictator and hopes to become king. He is certain of the people's loyalty, despite their repugnance at the idea of a monarch.



Renowned for his feats in war, Caesar's actions have repulsed even the bloodthirsty Senate, causing them to demand he be tried as a war criminal in 55 BC, but Caesar began a civil war instead, ousting his brother-in-law, Pompey, from Rome. Following Pompey to Egypt, Caesar is disgusted when the Egyptians murder Pompey since he had planned leniency. In Egypt, Caesar becomes enamored with Cleopatra whose brother, Ptolemy XIII, drove her from her throne. They begin an affair which results in a son, Caesarion, and Cleopatra plans to betray Caesar by plotting an Egyptian overthrow of Rome; however, her plan is contingent on Caesar naming their son as his heir and successor.

The other option is for Caesar to become king as he will need a royal-born queen, so Cleopatra pressures him to accept the crown and everything goes according to plan until the Ides of March. As Caesar enters the Senate, he is surrounded by men he considers allies and stabbed repeatedly, but the death blow is given by Marcus Brutus, rumored to be Caesar's son. He is stabbed in the groin, an act of both murder and emasculation. Only after his death does Caesar receive the power he so greatly desired when the Senate posthumously deifies him as Divus Julius, though his murder demonstrates his mortality.

Discussion Question 1

How does Decimus Brutus convince Julius Caesar to attend the meeting with the Senate where he is ultimately murdered?

Discussion Question 2

What offences did Caesar commit against the Germanic tribes in 55 BC?

Discussion Question 3

How is Julius Caesar killed?

Vocabulary

contemplating, repugnant, demeaning, reciprocate, benevolent, atrocity, provocation, duplicity, intuitively, intervene, eminent, aquiline, aphrodisiac, dynasty



Chapters 3 & 4

Summary

In Chapter 3, in Philippi, Northern Greece on the morning of October 23, 42 BC, Octavian, Caesar's nephew, thinks himself immortal, though he is fighting a bad cold. The eve before battle, he sees two golden eagles which he reads as an omen, but he is uncertain whether the omen is meant for him or for the Liberators who killed Caesar. As the two armies face one another across a plain in a battle to avenge Caesar, Octavian's ally Marc Antony oversees the preparations as he is stronger than Octavian who does not even command his own men but makes up for his lack of strength with cunning and audacity. Eager for revenge against his cowardice of three weeks earlier when he hid as his camp was plundered, Octavian decides that the omen is intended in his favor.

Two years after Caesar's death, the world is still being affected by that treachery, and soon the effects will also be felt in Galilee where Jacob, a Jewish descendant of Abraham and David, raises his son, Joseph who is trained as a carpenter. The bloody Battle of Philippi will soon result in the Roman Republic being replaced by the Roman Empire, and Octavian will reign for the rest of his life, training Tiberius, his stepson and the next emperor, to his level of ruthlessness.

Though Octavian and Marc Antony are victorious, they will battle for another decade to determine which of them will rule Rome, and the entire world will be impacted by the outcome of this decision. Ultimately, Octavian defeats Marc Antony and orders the death of Caesarion to ensure he remains Caesar's undisputed heir to reign supreme over Rome.

In Chapter 4, at noon on March 22 AD 7 in the Jordan River Valley in Judea, the child Jesus is missing.

There have been Jewish rebellions since the death of Herod the Great because of the cruelty of his successor, Archelaus, who ordered the slaughter of many Jews in the Temple during Passover. Because of this, Rome inserts itself into Judean politics, replacing Archelaus with a prefect to whom the Jews are forced to submit their domain; still, there are more uprisings in Judea than anywhere else in Europe due to the increasingly oppressive fashion in which Rome rules the Jews.

When Passover ends, the worshippers head home to Galilee, and when Mary and Joseph realize they haven't seen Jesus, their twelve-year-old son, since yesterday, they are certain he's among their friends and family in the caravan. Unfortunately, they cannot find him in the crowd, so realizing they have left him behind, they turn back toward Jerusalem for the important task of finding their son.



Analysis

Chapter 3 describes how, after Caesar's death, the battle for Rome resumes as Octavian and Marc Antony team up to avenge Caesar, but once they win, they battle one another for the right to be the next Roman leader. Though Caesar did not attempt to alter Jewish traditions, the bloody Battle of Philippi decides the fate of the Roman Republic which is soon to be replaced by the Roman Empire. Eventually, Octavian defeats Marc Antony, and both he and Tiberius, his successor, are known for their ruthlessness, crucifying any man who poses a threat to Rome which will one day include a humble carpenter. The final battle between Octavian and Marc Antony occurs in Actium in 31 BC when one of Marc Antony's general defects to the enemy's side before battle, causing Marc Antony to flee to Egypt where he kills himself in Cleopatra's arms; she soon follows.

In Chapter 4, the Jews are worse off, though Herod the Great is long dead. Rioting followed his death with the Jews rebelling because his heir, Archelaus, was weak but cruel as shown by his order to slaughter all of the Jews filling the Temple during Passover; Mary, Joseph and Jesus barely escaped. Now, 12-year-old Jesus is missing. Passover has ended, and Mary and Joseph are on their way back to Galilee when they realize Jesus is not with them, so they turn back toward Jerusalem in order to find him.

Discussion Question 1

Describe the Roman civil war that occurs after Caesar's death.

Discussion Question 2

Why are there many Jewish rebellions after the death of Herod the Great?

Discussion Question 3

Where do Mary and Joseph assume Jesus is on their way home from Jerusalem, and what do they do when they realize their error?

Vocabulary

transpire, pompous, audacity, confiscated, lineage, subjugation, despotic, egalitarian, vanquished, devious



Chapter 5

Summary

On March 23 AD7, Mary and Joseph return to Jerusalem to find Jesus; meanwhile, he sits enraptured as he listens to the Jewish scholars in the Temple, and the priests and teachers are astonished by the boy's understanding of complex spiritual concepts. Though Jesus is aware that his parents have left the city, his thirst for knowledge about God is overwhelming, and he finds many questions to ask.

Unable to locate Jesus in the city, Mary and Joseph continue to the Temple where Mary hears Jesus's voice coming from the location where the sages teach the Scriptures, and she and Joseph are shocked at the ease with which their son is discussing God. When they angrily ask where he has been, Jesus replies, "didn't you know I had to be in my father's house" (page 76)?

Mary, Joseph and Jesus return to Nazareth where Jesus enjoys a typical upbringing, but the holiness of Jerusalem continues to call to him, and as he grows older, he develops wisdom and charisma, learning to speak eloquently in public, though he is careful of what he says to avoid being accused of blasphemy.

Joseph finds steady employment in Sepphoris, a cosmopolitan hub rebuilt by Herod Antipas since his return to Galilee ten years ago, and the Jews' outrage against Rome grows as they are heavily taxed by Herod Antipas to support his lavish lifestyle. Because Joseph is a skilled carpenter, he is able to pay his taxes, unlike many Jews who begin turning against each other rather than raging against Rome, and thus the tight-knit Jewish community begins to unravel, but they find hope in the belief that the new King of the Jews will help them control their destiny eventually. Joseph dies before Jesus's thirtieth birthday, leaving him the family business.

Jesus and Mary are very devoted to one another, but as his thirtieth birthday passes, Jesus knows that silence is no longer an option; it is time to fulfill his destiny, even though this decision will change the world and ultimately lead to his death.

Analysis

Mary and Joseph find Jesus in the Temple, discussing God with the priests, and Jesus's response about being in his father's house can be seen as an inference that he is the Son of God; fortunately, the nearby rabbis either do not hear or they ignore the blasphemy inherent in such a reference. Jesus's uncanny knowledge of complex religious concepts serves as an indication of his heritage as the Son of God.

The family returns to Nazareth which is a great place for a young boy to grow up, and Mary and Joseph, being devout Jews, pass their love of God on to Jesus who attends



synagogue weekly. Though Joseph's friends recall the infamy of Mary's pregnancy out of wedlock, they have come to accept Jesus as Joseph's son.

The growing Roman situation is also accepted, though somewhat bitterly. Jesus is careful of what he speaks to avoid charges of blasphemy since a year earlier, Judas of Gamala was crucified for such crimes.

Since the return of Herod Antipas to Galilee ten years ago, the governor has been devoted to rebuilding Sepphoris which becomes a cosmopolitan hub where Joseph finds steady employment; the Jews resent this large walled city, a picture of prosperity while Galilee starves. Like most Jews, Mary and Joseph fear Herod Antipas who taxes the Jews blind in order to support his lavish lifestyle. The mention of a poor young girl from Magdala who will become a prostitute in order to survive, though she longs for something better, foreshadows the role of this young woman in Jesus's future.

Unable to pay their taxes, many Galileans turn on one another instead of Rome, no longer sharing provisions or forgiving debts; thus, the tight-knit Jewish community begins to unravel under the rule of Augustus and Herod Antipas. Longing for the glory of the past, the Jews find hope in the belief that they will ultimately control their own destiny, and so they eagerly await the new King of the Jews.

It is not known how much Jesus is affected by this turbulence, but he grows into a strong man, devoted to his mother. Sometime between Jesus's thirteenth and thirtieth birthdays, Joseph dies and leaves him the family business, but as his thirtieth birthday passes, Jesus knows that silence is no longer an option; he decides that it is time to fulfill his destiny, and this decision will change the world and lead to his death.

Discussion Question 1

How does Jesus amaze the Temple scholars in Jerusalem when he is twelve years old?

Discussion Question 2

How do the actions of Herod Antipas impact the Jews?

Discussion Question 3

What does Jesus decide as his thirtieth birthday passes?

Vocabulary

converged, nuances, repression, inviolate, blasphemy, topography, navigating, reverent, inflicted



Chapters 6 & 7

Summary

Book II: Behold the Man begins with Chapter 6 on the shores of the Jordan River in Pera in the year AD 26 as scores of believers wait for John the Baptizer to cleanse them of their sins. The people are enthralled by this “voice of one calling in the desert” (page 98) who preaches that the end of the world is approaching and a new king will stand in judgment.

Judea is now ruled by four governors, one of whom is named Pontius Pilate; he is no friend to the Jews and has developed an uneasy alliance with the head priest Caiaphas to monitor the Jews' activities. Viewing John as a threat to Rome, the Temple sends priests and Pharisees to spy on him, but he mocks their hypocrisy before resuming his baptisms. The people wonder if John is the messiah that he preaches about, but the answer comes the next day when a dove lands on the shoulder of a man nearing the river, causing John to testify that this is the Son of God and the King of the Jews after he baptizes Jesus who then heads to the desert to fast for 40 days and nights.

Though John continues to grow in popularity, his inability to stay silent on the immorality of Antipas leads to his arrest, and Herodias, the wife of Antipas, holds a particular grudge against John and plots revenge. Despite the fact that John is imprisoned, a greater threat to Rome emerges as Jesus embarks on a spiritual journey, a “mission that will challenge the world's most powerful men” (page 107).

In Chapter 7, in Villa Jovis, Capri during a night in AD 26, Tiberius has exiled himself to the fortress where he indulges in his licentious lifestyle, feeling life in Rome is too hard on him so he rules from a distance. He grew up privileged, adopted by Augustus after his mother divorced his father to marry the emperor, but he was forced to divorce his beloved wife in order to marry Julia, the recently divorced daughter of Augustus who embraces the depraved lifestyle they lead. Thus, Tiberius loses his humanity, growing quick to anger and even quicker to slaughter those who disappoint him.

Though Tiberius is permitted to divorce Julia, he retires to Rhodes, becoming a drunkard, until he must return to Rome to be groomed to replace Augustus as emperor as his stepfather ages. He remains in Rome for twelve years until both of his sons die, at which point he moves to Capri to indulge in lechery. Still, Tiberius maintains control of the Roman Empire, so both Pontius Pilate and Antipas know that their allegiance to the emperor is vital.

Though Tiberius is a pagan, he admires the religious beliefs of the Jews and so orders Pilate and Antipas not to meddle in matters of Jewish law, forcing them to seek his approval before making any decisions. Thus, the Roman Empire begins its slow decline to ruin, and with little justice seen among the ruling class, the Jews look for a savior.



With John imprisoned, the Jews begin cautious conversations about a more powerful man; Jesus is about to arrive.

Analysis

Book II: Behold the Man begins with Chapter 6 in which John the Baptist is introduced. He is a prophet who preaches about the coming of the new king who will stand in judgment, and he gains his name from baptizing the Jews to cleanse them of their sins; yet, he preaches that one more powerful will come to baptize with the Holy Spirit. Fearing that John the Baptist will inspire an uprising, Herod Antipas spies on him.

Meanwhile, a new governor has arrived in Judea, Pontius Pilate, an arrogant member of the equestrian class who immediately enrages the Jews by erecting idols, leading to an uprising. Finding a new strategy for dealing with the Jews, Pilate forms an uneasy alliance with Caiaphas, a powerful high priest who also sends spies to John the Baptist. John yells at the spying priests, accusing them of being hypocrites, and his seeming immunity to Rome's threats causes people to wonder if he is the messiah.

Their misconception is corrected the next day when, as John baptizes people, a dove lands on the shoulder of a nearby man, Jesus, whom John recognizes as the Son of God and King of the Jews. After having John baptize him, Jesus heads out to the desert to fast for forty days and nights.

John's work is done, and he is one of the rare prophets who live to see their predictions to come true. Unfortunately, he is not the type to stay silent about immorality, and when he criticizes Herod Antipas for marrying Herodias, his brother's wife, he is imprisoned. Still, a greater threat is emerging as Jesus embarks on a spiritual journey, "a mission that will challenge the world's most powerful men" (page 107).

Chapter 7 focuses on the life of Tiberius in an attempt to explain his debauchery and ruthlessness. Despite his licentious nature and pagan beliefs, Tiberius admires the Jewish ways and orders Pontius Pilate to change nothing sanctioned by their customs, and Pilate remembers this order since his future depends on keeping the emperor happy. Herod Antipas also does as Tiberius orders, keeping his mouth shut and accumulating wealth.

Word spreads about Tiberius's violent behavior as he murders and defiles even children, but such is life in the Roman Empire which has begun a slow decline into ruin; there is little justice among the ruling class, so the Jews look for a savior.

John the Baptist is in prison, so the Jews look elsewhere, foreshadowing the beginning of Jesus's public life.

Discussion Question 1

What message does John the Baptist preach?



Discussion Question 2

How does John the Baptist react to the dove that lands on Jesus's shoulder?

Discussion Question 3

Describe Tiberius's licentious behavior.

Vocabulary

oblivious, celibate, depraved, abomination, monastic, confront, contrived, impenetrable, recant



Chapter 8

Summary

In April AD 27, Jesus clenches a coiled whip as he ascends the steps to the Temple, having come to Jerusalem for Passover as he does annually. Preparing to launch his ministry which has been a quiet one until now, Jesus unfurls the whip and climbs to the open-air plaza. Those who know Jesus and his peaceful mannerisms are astounded as he boldly approaches the money changers' tables and flips them, cracking his whip to scatter the animals being sold as sacrifices. He orders the money changers and livestock salesmen from the Temple, demanding to know "how dare you turn my Father's house into a market" (page 124)!

As pilgrims and Temple officials surround Jesus and ask him to prove his authority, Jesus vows to destroy the Temple and raise it up again in three days, cementing their belief that he is insane, but no one prevents him from leaving. Still, his actions are discussed throughout Judea, and some celebrate him as a hero. Because there are few available inns in Jerusalem during Passover, Jesus camps near the Temple, alongside many other pilgrims.

Jesus' angry act at the Temple has attracted the attention of the Temple officials, so the Pharisee named Nicodemus approaches Jesus, claiming that he knows Jesus is a teacher from God, but when Jesus reiterates his message that people must be spiritually reborn to be judged favorably by God and that God sent his one and only son to save the world, Nicodemus is infuriated; however, he is also fascinated enough to remember Jesus for the remainder of his life.

Back in Nazareth, Jesus is no longer content to be a carpenter. Since his return from Jerusalem, he has traveled, teaching in synagogues and becoming popular from performing miracles, such as healing a dying man, so his presence in his home synagogue on the Sabbath is exciting for the congregation.

Still, when Jesus begins to read from Isaiah about the Spirit of God anointing teachers and he claims the Scripture is fulfilled, the congregation is offended to learn that Jesus believes God sent him to share the good news; even his own family does not believe him! When Jesus claims he is the Son of God, the congregation is so enraged that they chase him to a cliff at the edge of town, intent on hurling him to his death, but when he turns and faces them, the mob parts and he walks away unscathed, though his words are unknown.

There is now no turning back, and though Jesus's message will spread to billions of people over the next two millennia, he is alone now, wandering through Galilee as he preaches about hope and love, yet to the powerful men who hold his life in their hands, he is a marked man.



Analysis

Jesus visits Jerusalem for Passover on an annual journey that thousands of other pilgrims take, and this demonstrates his dedication to the precepts of the Jewish faith; however, this Passover will be unlike any other. Money changers' tables line one wall of the Temple court as they exchange coins for Jerusalem's shekels at unfair rates. Though Passover is a holiday of faith, it is also about money for the Temple priests and their Roman masters.

Jesus has not been rebellious or challenged Rome at this point, but he now feels empowered to do something about the wrongful money changing he has seen in the Temple since childhood. Because Jesus is normally so slow to anger, those who know him grow alarmed when he becomes enraging, flipping tables and scattering sacrificial animals as he rants about turning his father's house into a market, a claim that could be deemed blasphemy.

Here, Jesus claims for the first time that he will destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days, a claim he repeats to the priests' chagrin but which has a different meaning than their original assumption as Jesus himself is the Temple that will be destroyed and rebuilt.

Though few witness these events, those who do know they've seen something special. Word spreads of Jesus's actions, and many Jews see him as a hero. During Passover week, Jesus continues to preach in the Temple, and he meets Nicodemus, a Pharisee who will never forget Jesus, foreshadowing his role in Jesus's future. This event begins Jesus's ministry as he travels and preaches after this, performing miracles and eliciting condemnation for the sin of speaking to Samaritans.

When Jesus teaches at his hometown synagogue and claims God sent him to share the good news, even his own family is skeptical. His claim that he is the Son of God enrages the congregation, causing them to chase him to a cliff at the edge of town with the intention of hurling him to his death, but his unknown words convince them to let him walk away unscathed.

At this point, Jesus has declared himself to be the Son of God thrice, and while this is considered blasphemous, there is no turning back. Over the next 2000 years, his message will spread to billions of people, but for now, Jesus is alone, wandering through Galilee as he preaches of hope and love; his message will rally many, but it won't convert the powerful men who hold his life in their hands - to them, Jesus is a marked man.

Discussion Question 1

How does Jesus launch his ministry?



Discussion Question 2

How does Nicodemus feel about Jesus after their encounter?

Discussion Question 3

Why does the synagogue congregation in Jesus's hometown chase him to a cliff?

Vocabulary

contortions, debauchery, manipulation, oratory, brothel, strangulation, degenerate, retaliates



Chapter 9

Summary

On a summer afternoon in AD 27 in the busy fishing town of Capernaum, Galilee, Jesus searches for a specific boat, and upon finding the empty vessel, he enters and waits for a fisherman in his early twenties who is named Simon. Simon met Jesus the previous summer where Jesus called him and his brother, Andrew, to be “fishers of men” (page 137), but their commitment to Jesus flagged in comparison to their familial responsibilities.

Having come to the right place for an audience, Jesus orders Simon to anchor offshore, and from there, Jesus regales the crowd with his insightful words. When Jesus tells Simon to cast his nets in deep water, Simon objects since his nets have been empty, but unable to say no, he heads to deeper waters, and soon, his nets break from the weight of so many fish.

Falling to his knees in fear, Simon begs Jesus to leave him alone for he is sinful, but Jesus renames him Peter and announces “from this day on, you will catch men” (page 139). Thus, Simon becomes Jesus’s first disciple and others quickly follow, including a tax collector named Matthew; by early 28 AD, Jesus has chosen twelve disciples to preach his message someday, all of whom are from Galilee except one, Judas Iscariot whom Jesus appoints as treasurer and calls “friend”, though that will change.

Though Jesus gains many followers in the small region of Galilee, his actions alarm the Roman leaders and Jewish authorities. Rather than back down, however, Jesus asserts himself, preaching the Sermon on the Mount which defines the struggles of the poor, oppressed Galileans in a way that will never be forgotten. In the Beatitudes, he reminds the Galileans that their situation will not last forever, extending into a dissertation on morality and teaching the Lord’s Prayer which the peasants all relate to as part of life under Rome rule.

Three months later, Jesus dines in Magdala at the home of Simon, a Pharisee who dislikes Jesus and tries to trap him into blasphemy, inviting a known prostitute named Mary as a test. Yet, Mary believes in Jesus, so she cries as she washes his feet and dries them with her hair. When Simon mocks the prophet for being unaware that Mary is a sinner, Jesus claims that her humility and love has earned God’s forgiveness, and Mary becomes a follower of Jesus and a witness until the end of his life.

Meanwhile, John the Baptist’s last days have come after two years of imprisonment, and questioning his life’s work, he sends his disciples to Jesus to learn if Jesus is the messiah. When they return, they tell John about the many miracles they have witnessed, and they also inform John that Jesus spoke of him as the messenger sent to prepare the way, claiming “I tell you the truth: among those born of women, there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist” (page 150).



As Antipas celebrates with some of the most powerful men in Galilee a year later, he promises his teenaged stepdaughter, Salome, anything up to half his kingdom if she will dance for his guests, and after consulting with her mother, Herodias, Salome requests the head of John the Baptist on a silver platter. Though Antipas fears divine retribution, he cannot fail to honor the oath sworn in front of his guests, so the executioners are sent and Herodias finally has her revenge. Still, she is wrong if she believes John's death will end the religious fervor overtaking Galilee; John the Baptist may have stirred emotions, but Jesus challenges authority in unforeseen ways, and he has one year left to live.

Analysis

In Capernaum, Jesus seeks a specific fisherman, Simon, who he has met before and called to be a fisher of men, yet Simon's commitment to Jesus has flagged because of his familial responsibilities. Though Simon is tired and has been unsuccessful with his fishing attempts, he follows Jesus's instructions to cast his nets in deep waters, and his success frightens him as it is evidence of Jesus's immense power and knowledge. Insisting he is sinful, Simon begs Jesus to leave him alone, but Jesus insists that Simon has been called to be a fisher of men, renaming him Peter, his first disciple.

Jesus also calls eleven more disciples, including a tax collector named Matthew. All are from Galilee save one, Judas Iscariot who is appointed treasurer and whom Jesus calls friend; the implication that the title will change one day foreshadows Judas's betrayal.

While Jesus gains followers, not everyone adores him. Reports from Roman spies alarm Temple authorities and Roman leaders, but rather than back down, Jesus asserts himself. The sermon he will soon preach from a mountainside will define the struggles of the poor and oppressed Galileans in a way that will never be forgotten; this will become known as the Sermon on the Mount, a key component in the Christian faith.

In the home of Simon, the Pharisee, Jesus meets a prostitute named Mary Magdalene, fulfilling earlier foreshadowing about the young girl from Magdala, and when Jesus forgives her, this could cause problems with him as sins can only be forgiven through sacrifice; however, Jesus insists that she is forgiven because she loves much, and Mary Magdalene will follow Jesus until the end of his days, foreshadowing her presence at his crucifixion.

Jesus attracts much attention as he continues performing miracles and preaching throughout Judea, but as John the Baptist's days draw to an end, he questions his belief that Jesus is the messiah he prophesied would come, so he sends his own disciples to learn more. Fortunately, John's disciples return with a favorable report, leaving him at peace.

Still, Herodias's animosity continues, and when her daughter, Salome, pleases Herod Antipas and earns a favor up to half his kingdom, she consults with her mother who commands her to ask for the head of John the Baptist on a silver platter. Though Herod



Antipas is hesitant to acquiesce to this request, he cannot go back on his word so he orders the execution, silencing the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Thus, Herodias finally gets her revenge, but if she thinks that will end the religious fervor overtaking Judea, she is wrong – John the Baptist may have stirred the Jews' emotions, but Jesus Christ challenges authority in unheard of ways and will continue to do so during his last year on earth, a note that foreshadowing his imminent crucifixion.

Discussion Question 1

What is the importance of Jesus's dissertation, later called the Sermon on the Mount?

Discussion Question 2

How does Jesus respond to Mary Magdalene's presence in the home of Simon, a Pharisee?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Herod Antipas execute John the Baptist?

Vocabulary

promenade, synagogue, dejected, charisma, noncombative, debunk, dissertation, anoint



Chapter 10

Summary

On an April day in 29 AD in Galilee, Jesus suffers as a victim of his own celebrity, his life becoming more endangered daily as many Galileans believe he is the Christ who will overthrow the Romans and rule the Jews which causes the Roman authorities to pay particular attention to Jesus, though they refrain from action since Jesus is peaceful and has not yet threatened Rome's rule.

The Jewish priests view him as a threat to their authority, but they cannot murder him unless he publicly violates religious law, so they send spies to watch him. When they openly question Jesus, their plans go awry because he outwits them, quoting Scripture against their objections to the many miracles he performs.

Though the Pharisees believe in miracles, they are certain that Jesus is not God, and feeling their authority questioned, they decide that time has come to move against the Nazarene. They encircle Jesus and his disciples, condemning them for their failure to participate in the ceremonial hand washing before they eat and hoping to hear Jesus proclaim that he is the Son of God since such blasphemy would be punishable by death.

Unfortunately for them, Jesus fearlessly does not recognize their authority, claiming they are hypocrites who cling to man's traditions over God's commands. Eating at a nearby house later, Jesus's disciples fear the results of Jesus agitating the Pharisee, but he explains that evil comes from within man and makes him unclean. These words push Judas further from Jesus as he planned a noble life next to Jesus after the Romans are overthrown, and these words suggest living a life amongst the lower class. Judas believes in Jesus, but his desire for wealth is more important; "for a price, Judas Iscariot is capable of doing anything" (page 162).

When Jesus asks his disciples who he is, Peter claims that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God to which Jesus responds that Peter is blessed because God has revealed this to him. Still, he reminds them that sharing this information with the public could lead to his arrest, but when he informs his disciples that he will suffer, be rejected, then be killed and raised to life on the third day, they do not know what this means or that Jesus has less than a year left to live.

Analysis

Jesus is very careful to avoid declaring himself as the Christ since claiming to be a king is a crime punishable by crucifixion.

Though Herod Antipas frets about the Jesus problem, he believes that the Nazarene is the reincarnation of John the Baptist, haunting him as punishment for ordering his



execution. Another reason that Herod Antipas and Pontius Pilate refrain from acting yet is because Jesus is peaceful and has not threatened Rome's authority.

The Galileans flock to Jesus because of the rumors about him performing miracles, and when Jesus breaks religious law by healing a man on the Sabbath, he foils the criticizing Pharisees by using Scripture against their arguments.

Despite hearing about Jesus feeding 5,000 people on two fish and five loaves of bread, walking on water, and resurrecting a girl from death, the Pharisees still do not believe in Jesus, though they believe in miracles; they are certain that Jesus is not God, and they are disturbed that Jesus undermines their authority since they love their elevated class status more than religion. Their status is generally taken for granted, but when Jesus questions their mandates, they decide that time has come to move against the Nazarene.

When Jesus preaches against uncleanness coming from within man, Judas Iscariot is upset by these words because, as treasurer, he frequently steals, and this message reminds him of being unclean and thus belonging to a lower class of people. This is not the life Judas planned for himself - he wants a role in the new government when Jesus overthrows the Romans, and to him, money is more important than his belief in Jesus. This again foreshadows Judas's betrayal.

As the Pharisees report back to Jerusalem, Jesus leaves Galilee for Caesarea where he seeks the refuge of prayer and reflection in a land where pagans dwell, uncaring whether Jesus is the Christ. When Jesus asks his disciples who the people say he is, they tell him some believe he is John the Baptist, others say that he is Elijah, and still other are adamant that he is the Christ. Peter believes Jesus is the Son of God, but Jesus warns his disciples not to spread this knowledge lest fate overtake him too soon. Still, he foreshadows his death when he predicts that he will suffer and be rejected and then be murdered and raised to life in three days. The disciples do not understand what this means or that Jesus has less than a year to live.

Discussion Question 1

What do the Galileans believe Jesus, as the Christ, will do to the Romans?

Discussion Question 2

Why do the Pharisees decide to move against Jesus?

Discussion Question 3

How does Judas react to Jesus's speech about uncleanness coming from within man?



Vocabulary

crucifixion, reincarnation, amassed, charlatan, interrogating, prohibitions, captivity, hypocrites



Chapter 11

Summary

A month later in October AD 29, Pontius Pilate returns to Jerusalem with his wife, intending to lend a dominant Roman presence to the Feast of Tabernacles. The Jews see Pilate as a villain because he used Temple funds to build a new aqueduct in Jerusalem, but he cannot rule the Jews without the aid of the high priest Caiaphas who maintains his power by staying out of Rome's business. The two form an alliance, and since neither of them need a messianic figure upsetting the balance of power, Caiaphas plans to arrest Jesus as soon as he enters Jerusalem; "the plot to kill Jesus is about to unfold" (page 171).

To his chagrin, Jesus has other plans, remaining in Galilee while his disciples visit Jerusalem and refusing to publicly announce himself as the Christ as they request. The Temple authorities are disappointed by his absence, and though rumors spread that Jesus is being hunted, no one knows where he is. Halfway through the eight-day feast, Jesus sneaks into the Temple and begins preaching, and just as he seems to be on the verge of professing to be the Christ, guards arrive to arrest him; however, Nicodemus objects to condemning a man without a charge, so Jesus preaches in the Temple for the rest of the festival. Leaving Jerusalem, many pilgrims believe Jesus is the Christ, but many still wait for him to ride into Jerusalem on a donkey, a sign prophesied for five millennia.

Months later, the religious authorities gather to discuss Jesus who is reported to be performing miracles again; most notably, he raised a man from Bethany, named Lazarus, from the grave after four days. The Pharisees fear that these miracles will convince the Jews to believe Jesus is the Christ and will cause the Romans to confiscate Judea, and Caiaphas agrees that it is better "that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish" (page 176). Now, Jesus must decide whether to ride a donkey into Jerusalem for Passover, a sign that will declare his identity as surely as it will condemn him to death. On April 2, as preparations are made for Passover, Jesus's disciples search for a donkey; "Jesus of Nazareth has six days to live" (page 178).

Analysis

Pontius Pilate and his wife, Claudia, travel to Jerusalem as they do three times a year, intending to lend a dominant Roman presence to the Feast of Tabernacles, a celebration of the Jews wandering in the desert for 40 years. Pilate has been the prefect of Judea for three years, but he treads a careful line between ruling and honoring the Jews' traditions.

The Jews were furious when Pilate used Temple funds to build a new aqueduct in Jerusalem, and they see him as a villain, though they are unaware that one of their own



is equally guilty. The high priest Caiaphas oversees the daily running of the city, yet he hides his cruel agenda in piety so that few know he is a dear friend of Rome and Tiberius. His admittance to the Holy of Holies marks him as the closest person to God in the eyes of the Jews, but he does not stand up for them, instead maintaining power by staying out of Rome's business.

Caiaphas forms an alliance with Pontius, and both are comfortable with the arrangement since they are more alike than different and neither need a messianic figure upsetting the balance of power; therefore, Caiaphas begins to plot Jesus's arrest. Though Jesus's disciples want him to publicly announce himself as the Christ, he insists the time is not right because "the world hates me because I testify that what it does is evil" (page 171).

When Jesus does not accompany his disciples to Jerusalem, the religious leaders are frustrated by his absence, and rumors that he is being hunted spread, though no one knows where he is. When Jesus sneaks into the Temple to preach, the religious authorities gather to arrest him, but Nicodemus objects, allying himself with Jesus and endangering his own life by dissenting from the other priests and Pharisees. Jesus preaches that he is the light and will go away, again foreshadowing his crucifixion. While the pilgrims long for the arrival of the messiah as he is the only one who can lead them, they wait for Jesus to arrive in Jerusalem on a donkey as predicted by the prophet Zechariah 500 years earlier.

Months later, 71 religious authorities gather to discuss the Jesus problem at Sanhedrin, the ultimate Jewish religious court where Caiaphas holds supreme power. Though reports indicate that Jesus has left Galilee, witnesses say he is performing miracles again, the most impressive being raising Lazarus of Bethany from the grave after four days. Caiaphas's belief that it is better for "one man to die for the people than that the whole nation perish" (page 176) parallels Jesus's similar speech about coming to save the world in the next chapter.

Thus far, the life of Jesus has continuously fulfilled Jewish prophecy, but now he must decide whether to ride a donkey into Jerusalem as it was prophesied. While it would be easy to fulfill the prophecy, it would also be foolish since the prophets foresaw a horrific death via crucifixion. Still, on April 2, with Pilate and Herod Antipas both returned to Jerusalem and Caiaphas preparing for the year's biggest festival, Jesus sends his disciples in search of a donkey; he has only six days left to live.

Discussion Question 1

Describe the relationship between Caiaphas and Pontius Pilate.

Discussion Question 2

How does Jesus avoid arrest while preaching in the Temple?



Discussion Question 3

Why is Jesus's decision whether or not to ride a donkey into Jerusalem significant?

Vocabulary

conjunction, commemorate, opulence, indiscretion, atonement, equestrian, messianic, innuendo, salvation, decomposition



Chapters 12 & 13

Summary

Book III: If You Are the Son of God, Take Yourself Off This Cross, begins with Chapter 12, set outside Jerusalem on the afternoon of Sunday, April 2 AD 30, as pilgrims make the annual journey to Jerusalem, but this year's Passover will be the most memorable in history. Informing his disciples that they are going to Jerusalem, Jesus also warns them that he will be betrayed, crucified and raised to life on the third day.

On the way into the city, the disciples argue about their positions in Jesus's new regime, but with no plans of war or government, Jesus encourages them to serve others rather than fight for worldly status "for even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (page 184).

Lazarus of Bethany hosts Jesus and his disciples during the week of Passover, and while two disciples are sent to acquire a donkey, Jesus and the others head toward Jerusalem. When the two groups reunite, Jesus mounts the donkey as the pilgrims bow, wave palm branches and praise God at this sign of the messiah's arrival. As the moment approaches when he must stake his claim as the King of the Jews, Jesus weeps for fear that even those who know him best don't understand his message since the disciples still do not realize that his kingdom is not of this world but of the next.

Though he is fully aware that fulfilling this prophecy will ultimately lead to his death, Jesus descends the Mount of Olives on the back of a donkey, crossing the valley and riding into Jerusalem.

The following day at dawn, in Chapter 13, Jesus and his disciples walk back to Jerusalem. Though pilgrims adored him yesterday, Jesus is well aware that he has raised the concerns of the Roman and Jewish authorities. Still, they did not act against him for fear of the pilgrims' retaliation, plus he did nothing to suggest that he is plotting a rebellion; however, today will be very different, and Jesus's agitation is apparent.

Though his fame makes it unwise to show his temper, Jesus fearlessly overturns the money changers' tables in the Temple yet again, accusing them of turning a house of prayer into a vipers' den. While the guards would now be justified to arrest Jesus, it is inadvisable due to the empowered crowds surrounding him who cheer for the "Son of David" (page 193).

Still a free man, Jesus returns to Bethany, but now that he has shown open antagonism toward the Temple authorities, Caiaphas determines that Jesus is a false prophet and must be eliminated; however, to remain pure himself, Caiaphas must act before Passover begins, and though it is a busy week for him, silencing Jesus is the most important item on his agenda and time is running out, with only four days until Passover begins.



Analysis

Book 3: If You are the Son of God, Take Yourself Off This Cross begins with Chapter 12 in which the road to Galilee is clogged with Passover pilgrims yet again, and many stop in farming villages for mikvah, the purification process by which to prepare for God's holiness during Passover, allowing them to mentally prepare for a week focused on holiness and purity. Despite its traditional beginnings, this Passover will be the most memorable in history as Jesus's arrival is unlike any other.

After six months on a journey away from Galilee, Jesus returns, predicting that he will be betrayed, crucified and raised to life on the third day, again foreshadowing imminent events. On his way to Jerusalem with his disciples, James and John argue about who will sit by Jesus's side in the new regime while the others also hope for glory, but with no plans of war or government.

Jesus calls his disciples together and encourages them to serve others rather than fight for position because "even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (page 184); this quote parallels Caiaphas's claim in the previous chapter that it is better for one man to die than for the entire nation to perish, foreshadowing Jesus's crucifixion. Though Jesus is predicting his death, his disciples willfully ignore this warning because, to them, Jesus dying is incomprehensible.

The Pharisees are disgusted when Jesus enters the city on a donkey, but when they tell him to rebuke his disciples for calling him the Son of David, he refuses. Jesus's entire life has pointed to this moment when he will stake his claim as the "King of the Jews", but now he weeps as the end nears. He fears his disciples, the men who know him best, don't truly understand his message, and he knows his claim of being king will lead to his death. Though many believe he is the anointed one, Moses and David made flesh, both of them were cast out by society, and Jesus wonders if anyone will believe he is the Son of God. Despite his doubts and fears, Jesus shows his devotion to God's will by descending the Mount of Olives on the back of a donkey, entering Jerusalem and fulfilling centuries of prophecy.

In the next chapter, Jesus visits the Temple as a pilgrim, not as a teacher, so the guards do not move against him, mainly because of the multitude of pilgrims surrounding him who obviously want Jesus as their king but also because Jesus does nothing to suggest he is plotting a rebellion.

On Monday, Jesus's growing agitation is obvious as he curses a fig tree for its lack of fruit, though it is out of season. This uncharacteristic outburst is just the beginning as he plans to overturn the money changers' tables yet again, three years later. This time is different because he is well known, making the stakes higher due to his fame, and though it is unwise to display his temper, Jesus does not care. As people cheer for the Son of David, the priests are indignant, but Jesus does not refute the claim, quoting David as he compares the Pharisees to forces of evil.



Still, Jesus is free for now because, unlike others who prophesied that the Temple would be destroyed, he is not alone; he is a revolutionary with followers, but he is now openly antagonistic towards the Temple authorities.

Hearing of Jesus's teachings, Caiaphas decides he is a dangerous false prophet that must be eliminated since religious law condemns false prophets to death; however, in order to remain pure, Caiaphas must act before sundown on Friday when Passover begins. He has a busy week planned, but silencing Jesus is the most important thing, and he has only four days left until Passover.

Discussion Question 1

How does Jesus respond to his disciples when they contemplate their roles in the “new regime”?

Discussion Question 2

Compare and contrast the reactions of the priests and the pilgrims to Jesus's entrance into Jerusalem on a donkey.

Discussion Question 3

After Jesus overturns the money changers' tables at the Temple for the second time, what does Caiaphas decide and why?

Vocabulary

immerse, ejaculation, pilgrims, regime, refurbished, mandatory, contemplate, coaxes, contempt



Chapters 14 & 15

Summary

In Chapter 14, on the morning of Tuesday, April 3 AD 30, Jesus and his disciples enjoy Lazarus's hospitality, but as the sun rises, they head into Jerusalem, passing as simple pilgrims because they wear plain garb.

As Jesus sits down to teach inside the Temple, the elite religious leaders immediately interrupt to ask by what authority he healed people yesterday, but when Jesus refuses to respond until they tell him whether John the Baptist was sent by Heaven or man, they are stumped. Jesus tells them that tax collectors and prostitutes will enter Heaven before the Pharisees because these sinners believed John the Baptists when he came to reveal the way to righteousness, even when the religious leaders did not.

Jesus continues preaching by telling two parables that offend the Pharisees, causing them to send their disciples to trap Jesus by asking whether paying taxes to Caesar is moral, but Jesus refuses to be trapped, claiming "render unto Caesar what is Caesar's. And to God what is God's" (page 204). Soon, the Sadducees replace the Pharisees' disciples to ask Jesus what is the greatest of the 613 commandments in their religious law, but instead, Jesus chooses a new one: love God with all your heart, soul and mind. Furthermore, Jesus denounces the priests as hypocrites, predicting they will be condemned to Hell, before he disappears from the public eye for the last time until his condemnation.

On the Mount of Olives, Jesus worries his disciples as he predicts his death and their own persecution after his death, though he promises that God will reveal himself when Jesus is crucified. Meanwhile, Caiaphas plots to kill Jesus, but first he must take him into custody; he does not yet know that he will be able to buy the aid he needs from one of Jesus's own men.

On the next night, in Chapter 15, as Jesus and his disciples rest at Lazarus's home, Judas Iscariot enters Jerusalem alone. Unhappy with Jesus's predictions that his disciples will be persecuted, Judas believes that the priests would follow Jesus and talk of his execution would end if they knew he was the Christ, so he decides to force Jesus's hand. In Caiaphas's palace, Judas is offered 30 silver coins to turn Jesus over, and he eagerly accepts the payment in advance; Jesus will be arrested, and if he is the messiah, he will save himself, or he will die if he is not, but either way, Judas will live.

Analysis

In Chapter 14, Jesus and his disciples receive hospitality from Lazarus during Passover as Lazarus truly enjoys Jesus's company, trusting and revering him in addition to owing his life to the Christ. Likewise, Lazarus's sisters, Mary and Martha, dote on Jesus, washing his feet and his clothes.



As dawn arrives, Jesus and his disciples prepare for another day in the Temple courts, and on their way to the city, the disciples notice that the fig tree Jesus cursed has withered and died, so Jesus explains “if you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer” (page 200); this is just the start of the day that the disciples will remember for the rest of their lives.

Jesus’s plain Nazarene garb causes the priests to mistake him as just another pilgrim, but inside, the religious leaders question Jesus, asking by whose authority he healed people yesterday. Jesus refuses to answer until they tell him whether John the Baptist’s baptism came from heaven or man; however, the priests are stumped because if they say heaven, Jesus will ask why they didn’t believe him, but if they say man, they will offend the people who believed John was a prophet.

Continuing to embarrass them, Jesus claims that tax collectors and prostitutes will enter heaven before the Pharisees because those sinners believed John the Baptist when he came to show the way to righteousness. Jesus’s intellectual victory inspires greater love amongst the pilgrims, and he proceeds to tell a parable about wealthy landowners which means that the priests will lose their authority and be replaced by those with genuine faith.

His next parable compares heaven to a wedding, indicating that the priests are the guests who were thrown out for arriving poorly dressed, “for many are invited, but few are chosen” (page 204).

Stung by the defamation of their character, the Pharisees send their disciples to flatter Jesus and try to trap him by asking if it is right to pay taxes to Caesar, but Jesus wonders why they try to trap him, instructing them to give Caesar his due as they give God His due; thus, he marginalizes Rome without directly offending that great empire.

The Pharisees’ disciples are soon replaced by the Sadducees, the wealthy liberal sect to which Caiaphas belongs, and they ask Jesus which of the 613 religious statutes is the greatest commandment in the law. Rather than choose, Jesus creates a new one: love God with all your heart, soul and mind, plus love your neighbor as yourself.

Instead of relishing his victory, Jesus tells the crowd that the priests act for men to see, denouncing them as unclean hypocrites and predicting that they will be condemned to Hell. Jesus also predicts the destruction of the Temple, sealing his fate since the Pharisees overhear this claim. Jesus departs the Temple; this is the last time he is seen in public until his condemnation.

On the Mount of Olives, Jesus summarizes his life to his disciples who are concerned as he predicts his fate and also that they will be persecuted and killed after his death, predictions that foreshadow later events. Still, Jesus promises that God will reveal himself to the world when Jesus is handed over to crucifixion in two days.

Meanwhile, Caiaphas plots to kill Jesus before Passover, but first, he must take him into custody, and for that, he needs help; he is unaware of how cheaply he will be able to



obtain this needed help from one of Jesus's own disciples. The author's mention of the help Caiaphas will receive foreshadows, yet again, Judas's betrayal.

That night, in Chapter 15, while Jesus and his disciples rest at Lazarus's home, Judas enters Jerusalem along, furthering the foreshadowing about his betrayal. He feels that Jesus put a target on the disciples' backs, and he predicted that they would be hated, but Judas did not sign up for any of that; plus, he believes that talk of an execution would end if Jesus admits to being the Christ since the priests would eagerly align themselves with him. Judas decides to force Jesus's hand, having made his decision at dinner when Mary anointed Jesus's head with expensive oil as a sign of devotion, and Jesus claimed that she was preparing his body for burial. Judas finds it bewildering that Jesus allows himself to be anointed like the Christ even as he foretells his death, but this again shows that Jesus did not come to earth to establish a new government.

At Caiaphas's palace, Judas asks what the priest will give him to turn Jesus over, thinking that once Jesus is arrested, he will either save himself because he is the messiah or he will die because he is not; either way, Judas will live, so he makes the deal in exchange for 30 silver coins, approximately four-months' worth of wages paid in advance, promising to alert the priests of Jesus's whereabouts. Returning to Bethany, Judas is convinced that he is smarter than the other disciples and deserves a reward in this life. He anticipates the discovery, within the next few hours, as to whether Jesus is truly God.

Discussion Question 1

Why are the religious leaders stumped when Jesus asks if John the Baptist was sent by Heaven or man?

Discussion Question 2

What is the significance of Jesus saying "render unto Caesar what is Caesar's. And to God what is God's" (page 204)?

Discussion Question 3

From whom and in exchange for what does Caiaphas find unexpected aid in his plot to arrest Jesus?

Vocabulary

hospitality, patriarch, enthralled, ablutions, theological, resplendent, cosmopolitan, parable



Chapter 16

Summary

The night of April 4 AD 30, Jesus has much to do in a short time, so he prepares a last meal in order to define his life and say goodbye to the disciples, as he must trust to continue his legacy.

Meanwhile, while the city frantically prepares for Passover, Pontius Pilate is grateful not to deal with the Jews and their problems since Caiaphas and the priests avoid his palace for fear of becoming impure by association with the Romans. The Romans' crucifixion death squads prepare for the next day when they will execute a common murderer named Barabbas and his two accomplices, but they do not mind their bloody job which is to send the message that "Rome is all-powerful. Violate its law and you will die a grisly death" (page 218).

In the evening, Jesus leads his disciples to a room in the Lower City, but Judas is tense as he waits to learn the time and location he can send Caiaphas to arrest Jesus. After washing his disciples' feet, Jesus predicts that one of the twelve will betray him, and when Judas says it surely is not him, Jesus tells him, "yes, it is you. What you are about to do, do quickly" (page 220). Exiting hastily, Judas rushes to give Caiaphas the good news.

At a late hour, Jesus and his disciples head to the garden at the base of the Mount of Olives where Jesus prays in anticipation of his imminent death. It is past midnight when he returns to his disciples, and though Jesus is still afraid, it is time to accept his fate. He rouses his sleeping disciples as men approach, but he does not attempt to flee even as Judas kisses his cheek, signaling the guards to his identity which Jesus readily admits. Peter cuts the ear from a guard, but Jesus orders him to sheathe his sword and submits to being bound and marched to the home of Caiaphas where he faces Ananus, the true religious power in Jerusalem. The interrogation begins, and within minutes, Jesus is surprised by a sudden, hard blow to his face; the end has begun.

Analysis

On the night of Thursday, April 4, with only one day until Passover begins, Jesus and his disciples gather in a room in the Lower City. Jesus must trust his disciples to continue his legacy, and though he is held back by the terrifying prospect of his imminent death, he firmly believes that he must fulfill Scripture no matter how panicked he feels at the thought of the painful horror and humiliation awaiting him on the cross.

The city is in a frenzy as they prepare for Passover, but there are no preparations at the palace where Pontius Pilate and Claudia endure Passover as they take little interest in Jewish traditions. Luckily, Caiaphas and the other priests also avoid the palace for fear of becoming impure in the presence of the Romans, so Pilate feels the blessing of not



having to deal with the Jews and their problems, or so he thinks; this note foreshadows the imminence of Caiaphas bringing a problem to Pilate's attention.

Meanwhile, Judas watches Jesus intently, waiting for him to reveal his Passover plans so he can inform Caiaphas. He is confident that no one knows of his betrayal. Prophecy dictates that Jesus must be arrested in Jerusalem.

Around 500 Roman soldiers line up for their evening meal, but 12 of them know that will witness more than just the slaughter of sheep; three crucifixion death squads are needed because three men, a murdered named Barabbas and his two accomplices, will die tomorrow. Though crucifixion is hard work, these men do not mind because their job is to send the message that "Rome is all-powerful. Violate its law & you will die a grisly death" (page 218).

Before dinner with his disciples, Jesus demonstrates his humility by washing their feet, an act usually reserved for servants and slaves. After predicting that one of the 12 disciples will betray him, Jesus acknowledges the truth when Judas claims it is not him, telling him to do it quickly. Jesus knows where Judas is going, and though he once considered Judas a friend, years of friendship disappear easily when money is involved. Judas clutches his money as he heads toward Caiaphas's palace, foreshadowing Jesus's imminent arrest.

Late that night, Jesus and his disciples visit the Garden of Gethsemane, located at the foot of the Mount of Olives, and as he prays, Jesus knows that it would be easy to escape to Galilee, but accepting his fate, he prays for the strength to endure what will come. When the guards arrive to arrest Jesus, Judas kisses Jesus on the cheek to signal the guards. Peter attempts to defend Jesus, cutting an ear from one of the guards, but Jesus orders him to lay down his arms as he submits to his arrest.

At Caiaphas's home, Jesus is imprisoned and must wait until morning for his trial; he does not wait for his disciples to arrest him, and it would be futile if he did since they have all fled. Although he knows that he will die alone without allies, Jesus keeps his composure. He knows that he will be questioned, and his words will be written for the ages. When he is finally led to his interrogation, the beating begins immediately, foreshadowing the pain and humiliation he will bear even before his crucifixion. At this point, Jesus is also first introduced to Ananus, the true religious power in Jerusalem and the leader of a 1000-year dynasty of priests.

Discussion Question 1

What is the job of the Roman death squads?

Discussion Question 2

Describe the Last Supper that Jesus has with his disciples.



Discussion Question 3

What does Jesus pray in the garden at the base of the Mount of Olives?

Vocabulary

condemned, concession, imperial, leavened, garrisoned, centurion, diligent, boisterous



Chapter 17

Summary

The next morning, Jesus is viciously beaten for his unsatisfactory responses to the interrogation, and though the method of interrogation is illegal, Jesus's offense was grave so Ananus is determined to make an example of the Nazarene. He orders alone time with the guards to adjust Jesus's attitude, and after hours of being beaten, Jesus can barely stand as he faces his accusers to argue for his life. Still, his spirit is unbroken as Caiaphas's sycophants provide false testimony, waiting for the accusation that will justify crucifixion.

Finally, Jesus is accused of claiming the ability to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days, soliciting Caiaphas to demand "I charge you under oath by the living God: tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God" (page 232). Though Jesus knows that Caiaphas will not believe him, he concurs, "yes, it is as you say" (page 233), claiming Caiaphas will see him seated at the right hand of power, and his implication that Caiaphas is an enemy of God causes the priest to rend his clothes in agitation as he accuses Jesus of blasphemy. No vote is needed; the verdict is passed by simple consensus, and Jesus has been convicted of blasphemy and sentenced to death, but Caiaphas must still convince Pilate to order his executioners to do the deed.

Before 7 a.m., Jesus is marched to Pilate's palace, surrounded by priests and Temple guards, as Caiaphas demands an audience, but when he explains what he wants, Pilate insists that blasphemy is a problem for Caiaphas, not a Roman concern, so he tells the priest to judge Jesus by the Jews' laws. When Caiaphas objects that Jesus is stirring up people from Galilee to Jerusalem, Pilate sees his escape; he refuses custody of Jesus and sends them to Herod Antipas, but Antipas also refuses to condemn Jesus to death because he is still haunted by the execution of John the Baptist. He allows his guards to mock Jesus as a king, dressing him in purple robes, before sending them back to Pontius Pilate who finally accepts custody of Jesus, leaving his fate in the hands of Rome.

Pilate asks Jesus if he is the King of the Jews, and when Jesus says his kingdom is not of this world, this is good news since Jesus has now committed a crime against Rome so his execution is justifiable; however, still hesitant, Pilate offers Jesus to the Jews as the customary released prisoner to celebrate Passover, but the Jews ask for the release of Barabbas instead because "a man who speaks the truth is far more dangerous than a mass murderer" (page 240).

While preparations are made for Passover, Pilate focuses on the problem in front of him. Knowing it is unwise to execute such a popular figure, he sentences Jesus to punishment to appease the Temple authorities, as he found no basis in the charges that Jesus is inciting the people to rebellion. Since Pilate has determined that Jesus does not deserve death, the prisoner is stripped and led to the scourging post.



Analysis

Ananus is agitated that Jesus does not cower when he is beaten, and when he questions Jesus about his preaching, Jesus tells him to ask the witnesses about what he spoke. Ananus comes from a long line of priests; his forefathers served under David and Solomon, and Ananus has made many compromises with Rome to maintain power. Just as he now judges Jesus, his son will judge James, Jesus's brother, three decades later and will be killed in a Jewish uprising for advocating the continuation of Rome's rule.

Though Jesus's interrogation is illegal according to Jewish religious law, he committed a grave offense, so Ananus is determined to set an example for challenging the Temple's authority. He sends Jesus to spend time with the guards in an attempt to adjust his attitude, while Ananus calls an assembly of the religious high court. For hours, Jesus is blindfolded as the Temple guards mock and beat him, leaving him bloody by the time he is led back to Ananus for yet another illegal trial. He can barely stand, yet Jesus must face his accusers and argue for his life. Instead of facing the religious leaders in the Temple courts as required by law, Jesus's trial is held in Ananus's home, but his spirits are unbroken.

Despite the late hour, news of Jesus's arrest spreads through Jerusalem, and a crowd gathers, including Peter and John who brave arrest because they have second thoughts about abandoning their leader. Accusations are thrown at Jesus in hopes of finding a charge that will justify condemning him to death, and when Jesus finally claims that he is the Son of God, this blasphemy requires no vote; the verdict is passed by simple consensus, and Jesus is sentenced to death, but Caiaphas must still convince Pontius Pilate to order his executioners to perform the deed. Unfortunately for him, Pilate refuses to judge Jesus, sending him to Herod Antipas who also refuses judgment, though he allows his men to mock and torment Jesus. Antipas refuses to execute Jesus because he is still haunted by the memory of ordering the death of John the Baptist.

When Jesus is returned to Pilate, he sees Antipas's decision as a movement of solidarity and friendship, but he still must deal with Caiaphas, and since he is running out of options, he accepts the prisoner. When Pilate questions Jesus, he determines that Jesus has committed a crime against Rome because Jesus claims to be a king, but he is still hesitant, though an execution is now justified. Jesus says that he came into the world to testify to the truth, but he is silent when Pilate asks what the truth is. Though Pilate offers to release Jesus to the Jews as the customary Passover gift, the crowd refuses, fulfilling prophecy as the request Barabbas instead because "a man who speaks the truth is far more dangerous than a mass murderer" (page 240).

Meanwhile, Passover preparations begin despite the sleepless night, yet Pilate is focused on the problem in front of him. Not wanting to execute such a popular figure, he orders Jesus to be beaten to appease the Temple authorities, and Jesus is led to the scourging pole, foreshadowing his beatings and pain, all of which fulfill prophecy.



Discussion Question 1

What leads to Jesus's conviction of blasphemy?

Discussion Question 2

How does Pontius Pilate initially react to Caiaphas's request to crucify Jesus?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Herod Antipas refuse to condemn Jesus to death?

Vocabulary

procuring, articulate, compromises, advocating, extorted, incriminate, insurrection, coherent



Chapters 18 & 19

Summary

In Chapter 18, during the morning and afternoon of April 7 AD, in Jerusalem's Upper City, Jesus is tied to the scourging pole and whipped, but he endures the pain because it is not yet time for him to die. He is removed from the pole and led back to the prison where the guards robe him and spit on the "King of the Jews", adding sadism as they form a crown of thorns around his head. Just as it seems he cannot take anymore, Pontius Pilate orders an audience, and at 9 a.m., Pilate presents Jesus to the religious leaders who call for his death, demanding he be crucified. Pilate washes his hands of Jesus's blood, leaving him to the priests. Jesus's cloak is ripped away, but the crown of thorns remains as he is led to his crucifixion. Nailed to the cross is the inscription that should list his crimes, but instead, it says "Jesus the Nazarene: King of the Jews" (page 247).

As he is led up Golgotha, Jesus is too weak to carry his cross, so an African Jew named Simon of Cyrene carries the cross. Those who may have objected to the execution are too distracted by Passover celebrations to heed Jesus's imminent death. Jesus is bound to the cross with nails driven through his wrists and feet as Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Jesus, watches in anguish, unable to do anything. As the cross is erected, Jesus suffers agonizing pain for three hours until he finally announces, "it is finished" (page 250). Bowing his head, Jesus Christ, the man who preached a message of love and hope, dies at age thirty-six.

In Chapter 19, the death squad thrusts a spear into Jesus's chest to verify his death before removing him from the cross. Most of the witnesses have departed, but Mother Mary and Mary Magdalene remain. Joseph of Arimathea, a Sadducee who objected to Jesus's illegal trial, declaring allegiance to Jesus's teachings, offers to bury Jesus in his private family tomb, and he and Nicodemus carry the body to the tomb, anointing it with myrrh and wrapping the body. Both women watch as a stone is rolled in front of the tomb. After predicting his death many times, Jesus of Nazareth finally rests in peace in the dark tomb.

Analysis

There are no gaps in time as Jesus is beaten throughout the morning and afternoon of April 7 AD 30, and though Jewish law dictates that a prisoner should not receive more than 39 lashes, the Roman death squad is unconcerned about such Jewish trivialities, following orders to beat - but not kill - Jesus. Jesus cries out in pain when he is removed from the scourging pole, yet he does not vomit or submit to seizures like most prisoners, though he has lost enough blood to be in the early stages of shock.



In the prison, Jesus is dressed in a purple robe and mocked as the King of the Jews, and then the guards add sadism as they form a crown of thorns and place it firmly on his head. Jesus is too weak to protest against the pain and mockery, but just as it seems that he cannot possibly take any more, Pilate asks to see him.

Jesus is led past priests who show no sympathy in their anxiety to see Jesus dead, and these religious leaders call for his death, claiming there is no king but Caesar, though this is an act of heresy for them to reject God in favor of the Romans. When they demand that Jesus be crucified, Pilate washes his hands, claiming that he is innocent of Jesus's blood and leaving him to the priests, though in reality, Pilate is responsible since no one else can order the execution. Pilate orders the executioners to take control of Jesus who is led to his crucifixion as Pilate sits down to enjoy lunch. Though his cloak is ripped away, the crown of thorns remains as Jesus is led to his humiliation. Normally, a prisoner's crimes are listed on a sign which is nailed to the cross for their crucifixion, but Pilate orders Jesus's inscription to read "Jesus the Nazarene: King of the Jews" (page 247) in an effort to provoke Caiaphas.

When Jesus is too weak to carry his cross, Simon of Cyrene, an African Jew, carries the cross, and the procession continues. Among his many pains, Jesus is so thirsty that he can barely speak. To make matters worse, those who may have intervened on Jesus's behalf are distracted by the beginnings of the Passover celebration, so no one objects as the death squad binds Jesus to the cross, placing his weight on his outstretched arms as they nail his wrists to the wood. Since there is no footrest, his feet are also nailed to the cross, and the crowd, including his mother Mary and Mary Magdalene, can do nothing but watch in anguish as the cross is erected and Jesus suffers agonizing pain. For three hours, the guards await Jesus's death as sounds of the Passover celebration rise to be heard on Golgotha, and Jesus looks at Jerusalem for one last time before announcing "it is finished" (page 250). Bowing his head, he stops breathing, and thus, the man who preached a message of love and hope to thousands during his lifetime and whose message will reach billions more over the next two millennia is dead at the age of 36.

Though Jesus is dead when Chapter 19 begins, there is still more work for the death squad to do. Though they normally would leave the body on the cross to rot, they cannot leave the body up on the Sabbath according to Jewish law, so after verifying that Jesus is dead by thrusting a spear into his chest, the captain of the guard orders his men to remove the body from the cross, laying him flat and removing the nails as they will be reused because they are expensive.

Most of the witnesses depart, but both Mary Magdalene and Jesus's mother remain. Also remaining are Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, a Sadducee and a wealthy dissenter during Jesus's illegal trial; both of these men publicly declared allegiance to Jesus's teachings through their disapprobation of the trial proceedings. Joseph takes Jesus's body to his private family tomb, though a criminal's presence in the tomb is seen as desecration, and even though they will need to undergo a seven-day cleansing ritual for touching a dead body during Passover, Joseph and Nicodemus carry Jesus's body to the tomb where they anoint him with oil and wrap the corpse. Per Jewish



tradition, the tomb will be reopened in three days for observance and to verify death, but Jesus is clearly dead; he predicted his death, and his prophecies are now complete as he finally rests peacefully in the dark tomb.

Discussion Question 1

How do the guards torment and mock Jesus in Chapter 18?

Discussion Question 2

Describe the scene of Jesus's crucifixion.

Discussion Question 3

What is the significance in Joseph of Arimathea's offer to bury Jesus in his private family tomb?

Vocabulary

scourging, dehydration, lacerated, atrocious, chalice, condescension, inevitable, decompose



Chapter 20-21, Afterword & Postscript

Summary

In Chapter 20, in Pilate's Palace on Saturday, April 8 AD 30, Pilate realizes that Caiaphas fears Jesus now that the Nazarene is dead and Caiaphas requests that the tomb be sealed for fear that Jesus's disciples would steal the body to convince people that he rose from the dead. They set a guard at the tomb, but Pilate refuses to give Caiaphas the sign of approval he so desperately desires, walking away silently to further distance himself from the execution.

Three days after Jesus's death, in Chapter 21, Mary Magdalene and a friend visit Jesus's tomb to anoint him with spices, knowing it will be a challenge to remove the boulder at the entrance of the tomb, but she finds the stone rolled away and the tomb empty of everything except the linen shroud in which Jesus was buried. "To this day, the body of Jesus of Nazareth has never been found" (page 259).

The Afterword explains that, according to the Gospels, Jesus rose from the tomb and was seen twelve times over the next 40 days. His message achieved much greater status after his death, and history claims that Jesus was the messiah. After seeing Jesus resurrected, the disciples went into the world and preached his message, and nearly all of them died as martyrs, executed for their belief. Pontius Pilate, Caiaphas and Herod Antipas all fell out of favor with Rome, and eventually, even Rome succumbed to Jesus's message when they legalized Christianity in 313AD. Jerusalem continued to suffer under the hands of Rome for decades, and even after Christianity became the dominant religion in Rome, the Jews were persecuted, first by the Romans and then later by the Muslims. In fact, Jerusalem was just returned to Jewish hands in 1967, interesting to note as Jesus predicted a very harsh future for Jerusalem.

In the Postscript, the author questions why so many sought Jesus, attributing his popularity to his message of love and hope. There is no doubt that Jesus Christ is the most famous person in the world, and even after his death, he continued to play a role in history as Rome's acceptance of Christianity expanded worldwide, influencing millions of people globally for two millennia.

Analysis

In the penultimate chapter, no longer afraid of being unclean since Passover has ended, Caiaphas has no problem entering Pilate's palace, and though Jesus is now dead, Caiaphas asks Pilate to secure the tomb for fear that Jesus's disciples will steal the body to pretend he resurrected. To Pilate, it is now obvious that the priest fears Jesus, but it is also logical because such a falsified resurrection would surely cause an uprising, so Pilate agrees and posts a guard at Jesus's tomb. Since Jesus is dead and no longer a cause for concern, this should be the end of things, but Caiaphas is



persistent in his attempts to obtain a sign of Pilate's approval for fear of Rome's reaction since Pilate tried to distance himself from Jesus's crucifixion. Unfortunately for him, Pilate has had enough of Caiaphas, so he walks away silently with giving his approbation.

In the final chapter, at dawn on Sunday April 9 AD 30, three days after Jesus was crucified, Mary Magdalene and a friend visit his tomb to perform the traditional task of examining the corpse and anointing it with oils. They know it will be challenging to remove the boulder blocking the tomb's entrance since Jesus's disciples are still in hiding, and they are unaware of the Roman guard posted at the tomb; however, when they reach the tomb, they find no guard and the stone has been rolled away – the crypt is empty of everything except a linen shroud. Jesus's body is never found.

In the Afterward, the author explains that what happened next is the root of Christian faith. According to the Gospels, Jesus resurrected and ascended to heaven, and during the 40 days in between these two events, he was seen 12 times by up to 500 witnesses. After his death, his life and his message received much greater status so that history records him as the messiah, even in Roman writings of the period. Jesus became a noted figure in Jerusalem and beyond while other prophets were forgotten, and though unwelcome, his followers persist, eventually taking up the cross as a symbol of their pride in their faith.

After the crucifixion, the behavior of Jesus's disciples also underwent a radical change because of their certainty that they saw Jesus resurrected, and thus, they soon went out into the world, fearlessly preaching his message and paying tremendously for their faith as most of them were martyred for their belief that Jesus was the Son of God. Rome continued to suppress the Jews, leading to rebellions and the destruction of the Temple, but even after Christianity was accepted in Rome, the Jews were persecuted still. Eventually, Muslims overtook Jerusalem, building a mosque where the Temple once stood, and it was not until 1967 that Jerusalem once again rested in Jewish hands. It is interesting to note that Jesus predicted a harsh future for Jerusalem as there is no doubt that his prophecies came true.

The Postscript questions why so many people sought Jesus, and the author attributes his popularity to his message of love, truth, hope and miracles, noting that there is no doubt Jesus is the most famous person in the world. After his death, Jesus continued to play a role in history as Rome's acceptance of Christianity allowed the religion to expand worldwide without any meaningful competition in terms of followers until Muhammad founded Islam in 610 AD. In America, many important leaders were influenced by Jesus's teachings, such as Abraham Lincoln, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Ronald Regan who all relied on his teachings. Though O'Reilly admits that it was difficult to separate fact from myth while writing the book, he feels that "Killing Jesus" offers an accurate account of the life and death of Jesus Christ, as well as how his message affected the world.



Discussion Question 1

Why does Caiaphas ask Pontius Pilate to seal Jesus's tomb?

Discussion Question 2

What does Mary Magdalene find when she visits Jesus's tomb three days after he is crucified?

Discussion Question 3

How did Jesus's prediction of a very harsh future for Jerusalem come true?

Vocabulary

messiah, postures, unconscionable, apparitions, martyred, parodied, apostles, sanctuary



Characters

Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is the main character and protagonist of "Killing Jesus". The self-proclaimed Son of God, messiah and King of the Jews, Jesus fulfills many prophecies from Jewish culture, leading to the claim that he is arguably the most influential man in the world. Jesus is born in Bethlehem in 5 BC, causing Herod the Great to order the slaughter of all Jewish baby boys when he learns that the King of the Jews has been born. Fortunately, Jesus's parents manage to escape with him before he can be harmed. When Jesus is twelve years old, his parents realize he is missing from their caravan as they return home from celebrating Passover in Jerusalem, and they find him teaching in his "Father's house" to scholars who are amazed at his understanding of complex religious subjects. While Jesus enjoys a nice childhood, the Jews' outrage against Rome grow, and by age 30, Jesus realizes that silence is no longer an option, though his decision will change the world and lead to his death. As John the Baptist preaches about the messiah coming, he recognizes Jesus as the Son of God when a dove lands on Jesus's shoulder.

In the Temple in AD 27, Jesus overturns the money changers' tables and chases off the sacrificial animals being sold in anger at those who turn his Father's house into a market. He vows to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days; thus, Jesus begins traveling and teaching, gaining followers by performing miracles throughout Judea. He summons twelve disciples to learn his message and preach in his stead one day, and he encourages the oppressed Galileans when he preaches the Sermon on the Mount. When a Pharisee tries to trick Jesus by introducing him to a prostitute, Jesus forgives Mary Magdalene because of her love, and she becomes a follower of Jesus also. Though the Jewish and Roman authorities begin to view Jesus as a threat, they leave him alone because his message is peaceful, but Jesus's disciples, especially Judas, worry about their positions as Jesus provokes these leaders. After Jesus raises Lazarus from the grave, the priests fear an uprising, and Caiaphas begins plotting against Jesus. In 30 AD, Jesus enters Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, fulfilling prophecy about the messiah, and this causes Caiaphas to determine that Jesus is a false prophet who must be eliminated. The priests try in vain to trap Jesus in blasphemy, but he is too smart for him.

During the Last Supper, Jesus predicts that one of his twelve disciples will betray him shortly before Judas rushes off to Caiaphas. After praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus submits to his arrest as Judas betrays him with a kiss. In custody, Jesus is interrogated illegally and beaten viciously by the Temple guards until, at last, they convict him of blasphemy and condemn him to death when he agrees he is the Son of God.

Pontius Pilate and Herod Antipas both refuse custody, and when Pilate is forced to accept custody of Jesus, he offers to release the Christ to the Jews for Passover;



however, the Jews request Barabbas, a murderer, instead, so Jesus is scourged, crowned with thorns and mocked as the King of Jews. Though Pilate plans to release Jesus after his punishment, the Jewish priests demand his death, so Pilate washes his hands of the arrangement. Jesus is led to Golgotha where he is nailed to a cross and dies at age 36. He is removed from the cross and buried in a tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea, but three days later, the tomb is found empty, and his body is never recovered.

Over the next 40 days, Jesus Christ is said to have appeared twelve times before ascending into Heaven. His disciples preach his message throughout the world, and many are martyred. Indisputably, Jesus is the most famous person in the world, and his message reaches billions of people over the next 2000 years.

Disciples

The disciples are twelve men called by Jesus to follow him and preach his message after his death. All of the disciples are Jews, selected by Jesus to spread his message of hope and love after he is crucified, though he predicts that they will be persecuted for following him. During Jesus's life, his disciples encourage him to reveal himself as the Son of God, but fearful of being persecution as he predicted, the disciples flee Jerusalem after Jesus is arrested. The disciples follow Jesus for the last year of his life, and after his crucifixion and resurrection, they go out into the world to share his teachings, thus becoming known as apostles.

The first disciple that Jesus calls is a fisherman named Simon, whom Jesus renames Peter and who is also called the Rock. After Jesus's death, Peter forms the Catholic Church in Rome. Peter is executed upside down since he refuses to be martyred in the same way as Jesus because he is undeserving. Peter's brother, Andrew, is another disciple, and after Jesus's death, he preaches the message in Ukraine, Russia and Greece before being martyred. James and John are also fisherman who follow Jesus and preach his message until they are martyred. Matthew is Capernaum's despised local taxman who oversees all collections for Herod Antipas until he begins following Jesus; he is slaughtered in Ethiopia for preaching the Christian message.

Thomas is speared to death in India, while Bartholomew preaches in Egypt, Arabia and Iran before being flayed and beheaded in India. Philip evangelizes in Turkey until he is martyred by being hung upside down with hooks through his ankles. Other disciples, little mentioned, are James, the son of Alphaeus, Simon called the Zealot and Judas, the son of James. The most infamous of Jesus's disciples is Judas Iscariot, the only disciple that was not born in Galilee. Greedy and selfish, Judas aids Caiaphas in his plot to arrest Jesus, betraying Jesus with a kiss in the Garden of Gethsemane in exchange for 30 pieces of silver. The Gospels suggest that Judas committed suicide out of shame and guilt after Jesus's crucifixion.



Caiaphas

Caiaphas is the most powerful high priest in the Jerusalem Temple; coming from a long line of priests, he lives in a lavish house in the upper city and has complete power over religious life, including enforcement of Jewish law up to condemning people to death. As he oversees the daily running of Jerusalem and hides his cruelty with piety, Caiaphas forms an uneasy alliance with Pontius, and since neither of them need Jesus, a messianic figure, upsetting the balance of power, Caiaphas plots Jesus's downfall. He conspires with Judas Iscariot to arrest Jesus and tries to persuade Pilate to order Jesus's execution. After Pilate is removed from power, Caiaphas disappears into history.

Pontius Pilate

Pontius Pilate is a Roman pagan sent to govern Jerusalem, and when he learns of a Jewish rebel, Jesus, he is hesitant to act against the peaceful dissenter despite pressure from Caiaphas. After Caiaphas arrests Jesus, Pilate refuses custody, sending him to Herod Antipas who returns the messiah to Pilate. Still feeling it is unwise to execute such a popular figure, Pilate has Jesus punished with a beating, but when he offers to release Jesus for Passover, the Jews reject the offer. When the priests insist on Jesus being crucified, Pilate washes his hands of Jesus's blood. He loses his job six years later for intervening in another case involving a messiah.

John the Baptizer

John the Baptizer (or Baptist) preaches that the end of the world is coming and Jews must be cleansed through baptism in water in order to be forgiven; he also predicts the coming of the messiah and even identifies Jesus as the Son of God when he arrives on the banks of the Jordan River to be baptized. When John criticizes Herod Antipas for taking his brother's wife, he is imprisoned for two years until Salome, Herod's stepdaughter, dances for Herod Antipas and requests the head of John the Baptist on a silver platter.

Julius Caesar

Julius Caesar is the Roman ruler who hopes to be king, but he is betrayed and killed by the Roman Senate on the Ides of March. Caesar establishes the precedent of dealing with Rome's enemies through unthinkably harsh punishment.

Herod the Great

The governor of Judea when Jesus is born, Herod the Great orders the deaths of all male infants after hearing of the birth of the King of the Jews.



Mary Magdalene

Mary Magdalene is a prostitute from Magdala sent to test Jesus, but after she anoints his feet with expensive oil and dries them with her hair, Jesus forgives her sins and praises her humility. Mary becomes one of Jesus's followers, witnessing his crucifixion and finding his tomb empty three days later.

Lazarus

Lazarus is a man from Bethany whom Jesus raises from death. He believes in Jesus, as do his sisters Mary and Martha. Lazarus hosts Jesus and his disciples at his home during Jesus's last Passover on earth.

Pharisees and Sadducees

The Pharisees and the Sadducees are priests of the Temple in Jerusalem, but they are more interested in worldly power than in God. They spy on Jesus who criticizes them, and they are the driving force behind his crucifixion.

Barabbas

Barabbas is a common murderer sentenced to death, but the Jews choose his release over Jesus's for their Passover celebration.

Mary

Mary, the mother of Jesus, is a virgin impregnated by the Holy Spirit. She is fearful of her son's destiny and mourns his death.

Joseph

A carpenter, Joseph is Mary's husband and the earthly father of Jesus. He saves Jesus from Herod the Great's cruelty because of a vision where he sees the imminent slaughter of Jewish male infants in Bethlehem. Joseph trains Jesus as a carpenter and leaves him the family business when he dies before Jesus's thirtieth birthday.



Symbols and Symbolism

Crucifix/Cross

After Jesus's death, Christians were mocked for worshipping a criminal and his cross, but over time, Christians began crossing their forehead and chest to ward off demons. By the fourth century AD, the cross was viewed with pride as a symbol that Jesus Christ suffered a lowly death for the benefit of all mankind. The crucifix, the cross depicting Jesus still hanging on it, did not become a symbol of Christianity until six centuries after his death, and this lack of representation can possibly be attributed to the Church's belief in his resurrection, meaning he is no longer on the cross.

Temple

Located in Jerusalem, the Temple is the center of Jewish religious culture. Pilgrimages are made to the Temple several times a year for certain feasts, such as Passover, and foreigners are forbidden from entering. The Temple was first built by Solomon in the tenth century BC, and after it was leveled in 586 BC by the Babylonians, it was rebuilt 70 years later. At the time of Jesus's birth, Herod had recently renovated and expanded the Temple, and thus it served as a symbol of Judaism and the evil king himself. Jesus begins his message in the Temple when he overturns the money changers' tables.

Rubicon

Caesar's decision to cross the Rubicon and enter Italy against orders symbolizes the beginning of an Italian civil war and technically the first world war in history.

Caesar's Death Blow

Marcus Brutus, rumored to be Caesar's son, delivers the death blow to Caesar's groin in an act of murder and emasculation, meant to humiliate Caesar for his refusal to claim Marcus as his son.

Dove

While John the Baptist preaches, a dove lands on Jesus Christ's shoulder as he walks toward the river, and this allows John the Baptist to recognize the Lamb of God, claiming that the Spirit of God came down from Heaven and remained on Jesus. This is how John the Baptist identifies the messiah whose coming he has prophesied.



Karet

Karet is a Jewish holy punishment that indicates being spiritually cut off from God; it results from 36 transgressions, including failure to visit the Temple during Passover.

Shekels

Shekels are the Israeli unit of currency which are decorated with images of plants and nonhuman likenesses in keeping with Jewish law which forbids graven images. Shekels are the only form of money accepted in the Temple for paying annual taxes and purchasing animals for ritual sacrifice, but the exchange rates are unfair. Jesus first enters the public sphere when he chides the money changes for defiling his father's house and overturns their tables.

Sermon on the Mount

In the Summer of AD 27, Jesus preaches the Sermon on the Mount. Though this speech contains less than 2000 words, there is great power in its brevity, causing the author to claim that it may be the most important speech in history. Containing the Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer, this dissertation on morality spoke to the Galilean peasants of all they could relate to as part of life under Roman rule.

Holy of Holies

The Holy of Holies is the Temple sanctuary which is believed to be where God dwells. Only the high priest, Caiaphas, can enter the Holy of Holies which places him closer to God than any other mortal man according to Jewish believers.

Donkey

For centuries, Jewish prophets have predicted that the messiah would enter Jerusalem on a donkey, and though he knows it will lead to his death, Jesus fulfills this prophecy in AD 29.

Mikvah

Mikvah is the purifying ritual vital to celebrating Passover, as it creates a physical and emotional state of mind that prepares the worshipper to embrace God's holiness.



Last Supper

Hours before he is arrested, Jesus gathers his disciples for a last meal where he predicts that one of them will betray him. This Last Supper sets the precedent for the Catholic ritual of communion.

Tomb

After his crucifixion, Jesus is buried in a tomb owned by Joseph of Arimathea. By taking Jesus's body to bury, Joseph publicly claims his allegiance to Jesus, plus burying a criminal in the tomb makes it unclean. When Mary Magdalene visits the tomb three days after Jesus's crucifixion, she finds it empty, indicating his resurrection as he prophesied.



Settings

Rome

Rome is the setting of several chapters early in the book to provide background information on the empire that ruled during the era. The Roman Empire ruled Jerusalem at the time, and they were known for their cruelty.

Bethlehem

Bethlehem is the small town in Judea, near Jerusalem, where Jesus was born, but Joseph flees with Mary and Joseph when he has a vision of Herod slaughtering the infants.

Jerusalem

Jerusalem, the novel's main setting, is the hub of Jewish culture, and as this is where the Temple is located, thousands of pilgrimages journey here annually to celebrate Passover.

Nazareth

Nazareth is the town in Judea where Jesus is raised as the son of Joseph, and after Joseph's death, Jesus takes over his carpentry business.

Jordan River

John the Baptist baptizes Jews in the Jordan River as he preaches about the imminent coming of the messiah. When he sees Jesus on the banks of the river, he recognizes the Lamb of God.

Bethany

Lazarus lives in the town of Bethany, located outside Jerusalem, and this is where Jesus and his disciples find hospitality during the Passover week preceding his crucifixion.



Garden of Gethsemane

After the Last Supper, Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane, at the base of the Mount of Olives, and this is where Jesus is arrested when Judas leads the Temple guards to the garden, betraying Jesus with a kiss on the cheek.

Golgotha

Located right outside Jerusalem, Golgotha is the hill used as the Roman execution ground; Jesus is crucified and dies on Golgotha.



Themes and Motifs

Jesus Christ Fulfills Prophecy

Throughout this novel, Jesus fulfilling prophecy is one of the most important and repetitive themes, serving to justify the belief that he is the messiah and the Son of God since his life shows the enactment of so many predictions that were made by prophets centuries before his birth. This theme is introduced in the very first chapter as Jesus's birth even fulfills many prophecies, causing Herod the Great to grow alarmed and order the execution of all male infants in hopes of securing his own power by slaughtering the future King of the Jews. There were five prophecies concerning the birth of the messiah, all of which Jesus fulfilled, and they are as follows: a great star rises, he is born in Bethlehem, he is a descendent of King David, powerful men from afar will worship him, and his mother will be a virgin. When Jesus is a baby, Simeon predicts that Jesus will be the rise and fall of many in Israel, and Anna prophesies that he will free Jerusalem from Roman rule.

John the Baptizer predicts the coming of the messiah, and he identifies Jesus as the messiah when Jesus asks to be baptized. Jesus claims that God sent him as he preaches about God anointing teachers. As prophesied, Jesus is despised and harassed by the Pharisees. He also performs miracles, healing the sick and raising the dead, as prophesied, and he again fulfills prophecy when he rides into Jerusalem on a donkey for Passover in 30 AD, though he knows this will lead to his death. As prophesied by Jewish prophets of old, Jesus repeatedly predicts his humiliation and crucifixion, and all that he prophesies comes to pass. He also predicts Judas's betrayal. As prophesied, Jesus is arrested, beaten and mocked, and the Jews reject his release in favor of Barabbas. At the age of 36, Jesus is nailed to the cross and dies as prophesied. He also fulfills prophecy when he raises from the dead three days after his crucifixion. Also, as predicted, Jesus's disciples are persecuted and martyred for their faith, and his predictions of a harsh future for Jerusalem also come true.

Jesus Antagonizes Roman and Jewish Religious Authorities

Though Jesus's message is about hope, peace and love, he cannot refrain from antagonizing the Roman authorities as well as the Jewish religious authorities. Throughout his life, he offends these authorities by preaching that salvation comes only through God. His very birth antagonizes Herod the Great, causing him to order the death of all baby boys in Bethlehem for fear that the King of the Jews will usurp his power. Chapter 6 notes that Jesus poses a greater threat to Rome than John the Baptist, as his mission will challenge the world's most powerful men. In AD 27, Jesus attracts the authorities' notice when he overturns the money changers' tables in the Temple, accusing them of defiling his Father's house. He also tells Nicodemus that people must be reborn to be saved. The Roman authorities pay close attention to



Jesus, fearing an uprising, as he travels, preaches and performs miracles, and the number of followers he attracts alarms them, as he preaches that the situation of the oppressed Galileans will not last forever. Jesus provokes Simon the Pharisee when he claims that the sins of Mary Magdalene, a prostitute, are forgiven because she loves greatly and is humble.

Though many people believe Jesus is the messiah, the authorities refrain from action because his message is peaceful, but eventually, Caiaphas decides that Jesus is a false prophet and must be arrested. Nicodemus objects to Jesus's arrest in AD 29, making himself a target, but Jesus continues to antagonize powerful men in Judea. In AD 30, he enters Jerusalem on a donkey, fulfilling prophecy, and he refuses to stifle claims that he is the Son of God, further angering Caiaphas and the other Jewish authorities. In Chapter 14, Jesus shares two parables, both of which criticize the Pharisees, and shortly afterward, he is arrested and beaten. When he admits to being a king, Pontius Pilate has justification for his execution, and thus Jesus is crucified. A guard is posted at his tomb because Caiaphas fears that Jesus's disciples will move his body to make it seem that the prophecy of his resurrection is fulfilled.

Despite Jesus's antagonism of Roman authorities, Rome legalizes and adopts Christianity in 313 AD.

Jesus Claims Kinship to God

From his youth, Jesus claims that he is God's kin. The circumstances surrounding his birth indicate that he is the messiah, and he mildly claims this affiliation at age 12 when, as he discusses complex spiritual concepts with the Temple priests, he asks Mary and Joseph "didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house" (page 76). When a dove lands on Jesus's shoulder on the banks of the Jordan River, John the Baptist testifies that Jesus is the Son of God, and a short time later, Jesus accuses the money changers at the Temple of turning his Father's house into a market. Later, Jesus tells Nicodemus that God sent his one and only son to save the world, and while preaching at his local synagogue, he enrages the congregation with his claim that God sent him to spread the good news. Jesus's claim that John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way for him serves as an admittance of him being the messiah.

For fear of being accused of blasphemy, Jesus refrains from publicly declaring his identity; even when Peter identifies him as such, he cautions the need for secrecy lest he be killed prematurely. Jesus also preaches that he, the Son of Man, came to earth "to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (page 184). Jesus's claim that his kingdom is not of this earth indicates that his kingdom is heavenly since he is the Son of God. His forgiveness of Mary Magdalene's sins also establish his divinity as only God can forgive sins. In Chapter 14, Jesus creates a new Jewish law: to love God with all your heart, soul and mind. Before his arrest, he prays to his father in the Garden of Gethsemane, and later, he agrees with Caiaphas that he is the Son of God, leading to the conviction of blasphemy and, ultimately, to his crucifixion.



The sign on Jesus's cross identifies him as the King of the Jews, and after his resurrection, he is seen twelve times in 40 days before ascending into heaven; his resurrection and his ascension are both indicators of his divinity and thus his role as the Son of God.



Styles

Point of View

The point of view in "Killing Jesus" is third person and limited, as the authors write the narrative from the perspective of a unbiased narrator who has no role within the story. It is also fairly reliable as the authors based their content on Biblical records as well as non-religious historical documentation. The utilization of this point of view is imperative to the authors' goal which is trying to provide an accurate portrayal of the life and death of Jesus Christ as well as exploring the impact that his message and teachings have had on the world throughout the last two millennia of history.

The narrative is conveyed using mostly exposition with a small amount of monologue and dialogue. This is beneficial to the reader, as it allows the focus to remain on the events that occurred during Jesus's life as well as the political atmosphere into which he was born as it relates to Rome's domination of Judea. The monologues and dialogues that are included in the narrative serve to emphasize certain aspects of Jesus's message, particularly as it relates to famous speeches, such as the Sermon on the Mount. The viewpoint of the novel focuses mostly on Jesus Christ, but this varies occasionally to include the viewpoints of priests, political leaders, disciples and others involved in Jesus's life.

Language and Meaning

The language used in this novel is mostly stiff and formal, with proper grammatical techniques and sentence construction being adhered to. This matter-of-fact style of language is used because "Killing Jesus" is a non-fiction, historical account of the life and death of Jesus Christ. The verbiage used attempts to avoid emotional responses, focusing instead on the bare facts rather than taking a religious approach to this retelling.

The language utilized tends to characterize the individuals depicted and their religious beliefs, as well as the era and the political atmosphere which contributed to the world in which Jesus was born and lived. The narrative is conveyed using mostly exposition with a small amount of monologue and dialogue. This is beneficial to the reader as it allows the focus to remain on the events that occurred during Jesus's life as well as the political atmosphere into which he was born as it relates to Rome's domination of Judea. The monologues and dialogues that are included in the narrative serve to emphasize certain aspects of Jesus's message, particularly as it relates to famous speeches, such as the Sermon on the Mount. The language the author uses to write "Killing Jesus" aids comprehension by avoiding religious sentiments as much as possible, plus great care is taken to explain religious jargon with which the reader may be unfamiliar. Overall, the language is easy to understand and prevents the authors from sounding overly biased in favor of Christianity.

Structure

"Killing Jesus" is comprised of 273 pages, divided into 21 chapters plus a Note to Readers, an Afterword and a Postscript. The novel is further divided into three books that focus on specific portions of Jesus's life. The chapters range in length from two to 30 pages, averaging around 15 pages each. The chapters are not titled; instead, they are numbered, and the setting and dates of the events within are indicated at the beginning of the chapter. While the chapters are generally fairly short, they are also very detailed, providing historical context as well as events that occur.

The book encompasses a period of time from 5 BC when Jesus was born until his death in 30 AD, though some history about the Roman Empire dating several decades before this are also included. The amount of time that passes in each chapter varies with some providing details about a few hours while others summarize much longer periods of time.

"Killing Jesus" by Bill O'Reilly and Martin Dugard claims to be a historical account of the life and death of Jesus Christ. Explaining the atmosphere into which Jesus was born in terms of the conflict between Rome and the Jews, the authors follow Jesus's life and teachings until his crucifixion, taking great care to explain the reasons that he was persecuted and also how his teachings have made him the most popular man in the world. "Killing Jesus" is an informative retelling of the classic story that sparked the Christian religion.

The pace of the novel is quite slow, but it is still easy to read. The story is not told linearly; there is quite a bit of backstory explaining the political environment in Jerusalem regarding their relationship with Rome which is interspersed throughout the narrative. Overall, this is an intriguing account of the life and death of Jesus Christ who, according to author Bill O'Reilly, is arguably the most popular man who ever lived.



Quotes

This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul, too.

-- Simeon (chapter 1 paragraph 31)

Importance: In this quote, Simeon foretells Jesus Christ's role in the fall and rise of many in Israel, foreshadowing the realization that Jesus is the messiah.

I would rather die than be feared.

-- Julius Caesar (chapter 2 paragraph 14)

Importance: This quote demonstrates the type of leadership that Julius Caesar strives for, as well as his fear of tyranny, both of which are ironic when compared to the Roman rule of Judea.

The death of Caesar has directly affected the backwater known as Judea, even if its citizens do not realize it. But the Philippi, an epic moment in history, will affect the area even more. When this battle is over, nothing for the Jews will be the same again.

-- Narrator (chapter 3 paragraph 19)

Importance: This quote foreshadows how Caesar's death will change everything for the Jews.

FOREIGNERS! Reads the inscription, DO NOT ENTER WITHIN THE GRILLE AND PARTITION SURROUNDING THE TEMPLE. HE WHO IS CAUGHT WILL ONLY HAVE HIMSELF TO BLAME FOR HIS DEATH WHICH WILL FOLLOW.

-- Sign on Temple Gate (chapter 5 paragraph 9)

Importance: This sign on the Temple Gate demonstrates the prohibition against non-Jews entering the Temple; the penalty for noncompliance is death.

Why were you searching for me? Didn't you know I had to be in my father's house?

-- Jesus Christ (chapter 5 paragraph 16)

Importance: This quote shows the first time that Jesus names God as his father.

As he passes his thirtieth birthday, Jesus of Nazareth knows that silence is no longer an option. The time has come to fulfill his destiny. It is a decision that will change the world. It will also lead to his agonizing death.

-- Narrator (chapter 5 paragraph 58-61)

Importance: This quote foreshadows Jesus's imminent teachings and death as he decides that it is time to fulfill his destiny.



After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

-- John the Baptist (chapter 6 paragraph 9)

Importance: In this quote, John the Baptist predicts the imminent arrival of the messiah.

I need to be baptized by you, and yet you come to me? I baptize you with water for repentance... I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.

-- John the Baptist (chapter 6 paragraph 39)

Importance: Here, John the Baptist identifies Jesus as the messiah by claiming Jesus should baptize John and also through his explicit testimony that Jesus is the Son of God.

Get out of here. How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!

-- Jesus Christ (chapter 8 paragraph 18)

Importance: Here, Jesus again claims God as his father as he overturns the market tables and chides the money changers and livestock sellers for defiling the Temple.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

-- Jesus Christ (chapter 8 paragraph 34-36)

Importance: In this quote, Jesus preaches about the spirit being reborn and also testifies that God sent his son, Jesus, to save the world.

Our Father, who are in heaven, hallowed be your name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

-- Jesus Christ (chapter 9 paragraph 41)

Importance: This first teaching of the Lord's Prayer addresses many things that the Galilean peasants can relate to as part of life under Roman rule. It is also a portion of the Sermon on the Mount, one of the most famous speeches given in history.

(To Pharisee) Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet.

Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven – for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little, loves little... (To Mary Magdalene) Your sins are forgiven.

-- Jesus Christ (chapter 9 paragraph 56 & 57)



Importance: Jesus praises Mary Magdalene for her humility and forgives her sins, a claim that could be seen as blasphemy.

There is nothing unlawful about doing good.
-- Jesus Christ (chapter 10 paragraph 10)

Importance: When accused of sinning by healing someone on the Sabbath, Jesus argues that it is never unlawful to do good, reinforcing his message of love and hope.

Understand this: Nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him unclean.
-- Jesus Christ (chapter 10 paragraph 30)

Importance: Here, Jesus preaches against the Temple priests by claiming that what comes out of a man, not what goes in, makes him unclean.

He must be killed, and on the third day be raised to life.
-- Jesus Christ (chapter 10 paragraph 55)

Importance: This prediction foreshadows Jesus's death and resurrection.

The right time for me has not yet come. For you any time is right. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil. You go to the feast. I am not going, because for me the right time has not yet come.
-- Jesus Christ (chapter 11 paragraph 25)

Importance: In this quote, Jesus explains to his disciples that the time has not yet come for him to become a public figure. He also predicts that the world will hate him for testifying against its evil deeds, foreshadowing the public's approval of his crucifixion.

Yes, you know me. And you know where I am from. I am not here on my own, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him, but I know him, because I am from him and he sent me.
-- Jesus Christ (chapter 11 paragraph 35)

Importance: In this quote, Jesus admits to being the Son of God by claiming that God sent him and he knows God.

We are going up to Jerusalem. The Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life.
-- Jesus Christ (chapter 12 paragraph 6)

Importance: Again, Jesus's prediction foreshadows his crucifixion and resurrection.



Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.

-- Jesus Christ (chapter 14 paragraph 9)

Importance: Here, Jesus preaches about the importance of faith, assuring his disciples that God answers prayers.

I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me... It is one of the twelve. One who dips bread into the bowl with me. The Son of Man will go, just as it is written. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.

-- Jesus Christ (chapter 16 paragraph 20 & 22)

Importance: In this quote, Jesus predicts that one of his disciples will betray him; he also secretly identifies Judas as the betrayer, essentially telling him to get on with it.

I have spoken openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues or at the Temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said.

-- Jesus Christ (chapter 17 paragraph 3)

Importance: As Jesus is questioned and beaten, he refuses to answer questions, responding that he has not preached in secret and advising his tormentors to ask those who witnessed his teachings; this merely inspires more blows to be delivered to him.

My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest. But now my kingdom is from another place... You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I am born, and for this reason I came into the world, to testify the truth. Everyone on the side of the truth listens to me.

-- Jesus Christ (chapter 17 paragraph 73 & 75)

Importance: In this quote, Jesus admits to Pontius Pilate that he is a king, but his explanation that his kingdom is from another place refers to Heaven and his place as the Son of God. Jesus also claims that he was only brought into the world to spread the truth before reigning in Heaven.

I am innocent of this man's blood. It is your responsibility.

-- Pontius Pilate (chapter 18 paragraph 22)

Importance: In this quote, Pontius Pilate washes his hands of Jesus's conviction because he is hesitant to kill the blameless man; instead, he lays the blame on the Jews who demand Jesus's crucifixion.

To this day, the body of Jesus of Nazareth has never been found.

-- Narrator (chapter 21 paragraph 7)



Importance: The indication that Jesus's body disappeared from the tomb three days after his crucifixion and was never found emphasizes the belief in his resurrection.

Just keep loving them. And by the power of your love they will break down under the load. That's love, you see. It is redemptive and this is why Jesus says love. There's something about love that builds up and is creative. There is something about hate that tears down and is destructive. So love your enemies.

-- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Postscript paragraph 7)

Importance: This quote serves as evidence of how widely spread Jesus's message became and how many leaders shared his message of hope and love to inspire their followers.