



## Jesus Outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence (Studying the Historical Jesus)

By Robert E. Van Voorst



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Did Jesus actually exist? Much has been written recently on this subject, including numerous books examining the New Testament record of Jesus' life. Now Robert Van Voorst presents and critiques the ancient evidence outside the New Testament—the Roman, Jewish, pre-New Testament, and post-New Testament writings that mention Jesus.

This fascinating study of the early Christian and non-Christian record includes fresh translations of all the relevant texts. Van Voorst shows how and to what extent these ancient writings can be used to help reconstruct the historical Jesus.

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**Jesus Outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence (Studying the Historical Jesus) By Robert E. Van Voorst Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This book's aim is promising: to evaluate the evidence we have, outside of the Christian scriptures themselves, for the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. Van Voorst is a capable guide to this territory, which ranges from citations in Roman correspondence to the early Christian writings often called the "New Testament Apocrypha." His lucid and judicious account of the state of scholarship will be most helpful to seminary students and others beginning to engage this material. Unfortunately if inevitably, the different sources are treated unevenly, with the very well-known classical quotations from Tacitus, Pliny and the like receiving extensive treatment while the more lengthy--and debated--proto-gnostic texts receive scant attention. Van Voorst devotes a surprising amount of energy to refuting the idea that Jesus never existed. He also includes a long and inconclusive chapter about what we can learn from the assumed sources of the New Testament itself, which is more a tutorial in 20th-century scholarship than evidence from "outside" the New Testament. Seminary professors will want to consider assigning this book, but those looking for revelations about Jesus of Nazareth will be disappointed, since after much scholarly muckraking the author himself concludes that the New Testament is our best evidence after all. Better to turn to works like John Meier's *A Marginal Jew* for more fully considered and provocative accounts of the historical Jesus. (May) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal

Van Voorst has written a comprehensive, rigorously focused survey of the evidence for the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as manifested by the written sources other than the New Testament. He has translated all relevant passages into contemporary English and presents the most important issues in their interpretation. After a brief survey of the history and principles of historical Jesus research, he takes up the evidence from Classical writers, Jewish writers, the "sources" of the gospels, and Christian writings after the New Testament. He finds that while some of the Classical and Jewish writings are not useful or reliable, others are surprisingly helpful albeit quite sketchy in details. The "sources" are controversial, while the writings subsequent to the New Testament are derived from the New Testament and therefore of no value as historical witnesses. Van Voorst (*The Ascents of James*) is an established, careful scholar who has adopted a critical but responsible middle-of-the-road stance. This very well-organized and -written book fills a comparative void left by the deluge of historical Jesus books. It will be valuable for those interested in the historical grounding of their faith. Eugene O. Bowser, Univ. of Northern Colorado, Greeley Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Review

### Ben Witherington III

"Scholars have tended to say that there is no significant evidence about the historical Jesus to be garnered from sources outside of the New Testament canon. This book shows that that assessment is by no means entirely correct. Here we finally have in one book all the essential extrabiblical data from the earliest period about Jesus. Anyone who cares about understanding Jesus within his historical context will find this well-written study to be an invaluable aid"

### John P. Meier

"*Jesus Outside the New Testament* gives a clear, concise, and orderly presentation of the major sources — pagan, Jewish, and Christian — for our knowledge of the historical Jesus. Readers will be especially grateful

for the way in which Robert Van Voorst gathers together disparate texts that are otherwise difficult to find in one place. This is especially true of his treatment of the pagan authors. Both scholars and lay readers will find this work useful."

### **Library Journal**

"Van Voorst has written a comprehensive, rigorously focused survey of the evidence for the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as manifested by the written sources other than the New Testament. . . This very well-organized and -written book fills a comparative void left by the deluge of historical Jesus books. It will be valuable for those interested in the historical grounding of their faith."

### **Marion L. Soards**

"This careful study is a lucid, concise, and insightful presentation, analysis, and guide to the ancient extra-New Testament materials related to Jesus. Robert Van Voorst provides a tremendous service for those studying the life of Jesus by collecting, translating, and commenting on these often-cited but seldom seen (or critically examined) early references to Jesus. All students and scholars interested in 'Jesus' will welcome this work."

### **Paul J. Achtemeier**

"The material collected in this volume, along with the sober evaluations provided by the author, presents readers with a rather complete sampling of the noncanonical evidence about Jesus of Nazareth, from Greco-Roman, Jewish, and noncanonical Christian sources, both actual and hypothetical. Those interested in the contemporary quest for the historical Jesus have here much of the noncanonical evidence called upon by those who seek to present Jesus in radical as well as more traditional forms"

### **Internationale Zeitschriftenschau für Bibelwissenschaft und Grenzgebiete**

"This is a careful survey of all the relevant ancient materials on Jesus. A remarkable study, to be recommended for its references to a wide range of interpretive opinion."

### **Choice**

"Van Voorst's style is both readable and objective, and he poses questions that more skeptical readers would raise, such as 'Are these texts reliable?' and 'Why is there not more ancient evidence for the historical Jesus?' In the process he supplies a wealth of notations for those interested in further study, making it an ideal primer for all levels of university students, as well as general readers."

### **Review of Biblical Literature**

"For those who would like a trustworthy and readable introduction to early non-canonical sources related to Jesus, this book should be placed at the very top of the list. The balance, clarity, brevity, and scope of this book commend it as a textbook for courses at any level. While it may be of special interest to scholars and students, this book may be strongly recommended to anyone with an interest in the contemporary study of the historical Jesus."

### **The Expository Times**

"In a well-researched, yet highly readable study, [Van Voorst] introduces the reader to all non-canonical references to Jesus. . . Van Voorst helpfully analyses each reference in turn, situating each within the context of the work as a whole, asking from where each author derived his information, and evaluated its historical significance. . . Overall, the book provides a useful introduction to a wide range of literature from the ancient world, a clear outline of the state of the question regarding sources behind the canonical gospels, and a particularly valuable discussion of the place of the Gospel of Thomas and certain Apocryphal texts in reconstructing the historical Jesus."

## **Evangelical Quarterly**

"Van Voorst shows himself to be well abreast of recent scholarship in all parts of his book. . . He is a careful and cautious guide to the material about Jesus outside the Gospels, wisely concluding, as others have done before him, that we are thrown back upon the New Testament for solid information about him."

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Nancy Smith:**

The book Jesus Outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence (Studying the Historical Jesus) give you a sense of feeling enjoy for your spare time. You need to use to make your capable more increase. Book can to become your best friend when you getting pressure or having big problem together with your subject. If you can make studying a book Jesus Outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence (Studying the Historical Jesus) to get your habit, you can get a lot more advantages, like add your own personal capable, increase your knowledge about a few or all subjects. You can know everything if you like available and read a publication Jesus Outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence (Studying the Historical Jesus). Kinds of book are a lot of. It means that, science reserve or encyclopedia or other folks. So , how do you think about this reserve?

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#### **Tina Wilson:**

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