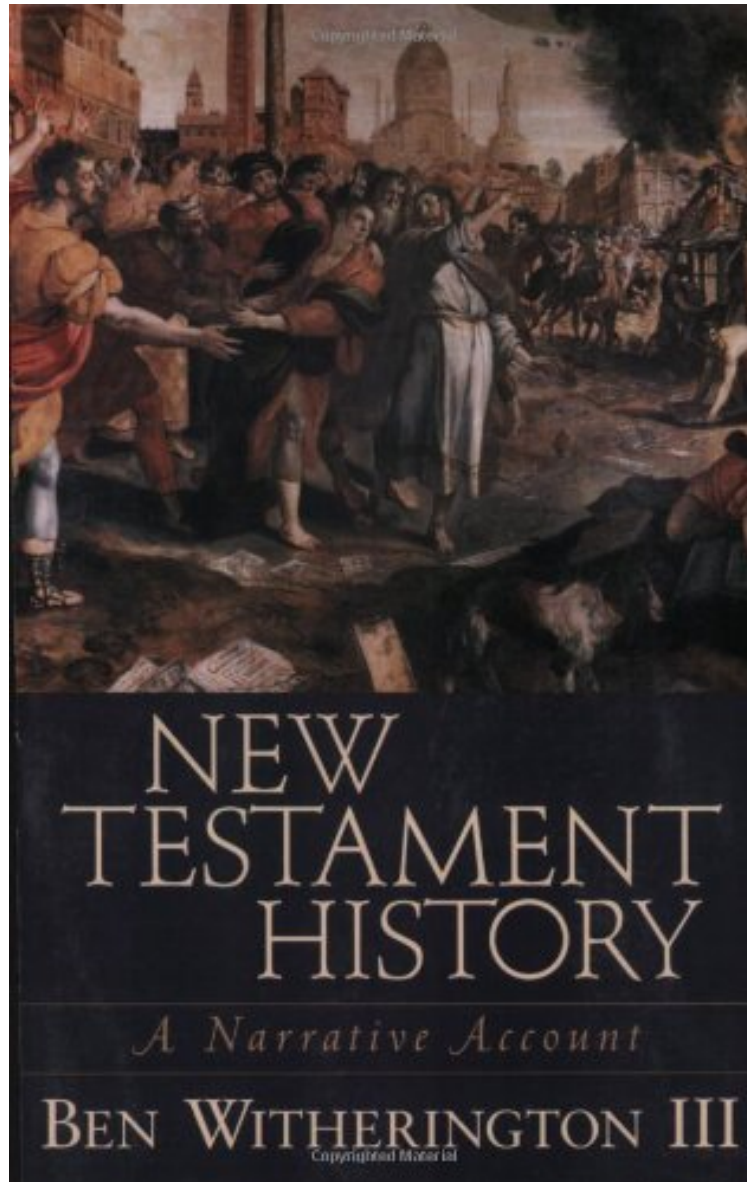


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## New Testament History: A Narrative Account

*Ben III Witherington*

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**Ben III Witherington : New Testament History: A Narrative Account** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised New Testament History: A Narrative Account:

27 of 27 people found the following review helpful. An Excellent New Testament History By Dr. Marc Axelrod For years, FF Bruce's New Testament History ruled the roost. Now we have an NT history for the 21st century. Ben Witherington tells the tale of New Testament History, beginning way back in the 4th century BC with Alexander's

conquest of the western world. Alexander's philosophy of spreading Greek culture and wisdom throughout the world affected the culture and milieu of the New Testament world. Witherington then speaks of the Ptolemaic rule over Palestine, followed by the Syrian conquest and the Maccabean revolt and then of course Pompey's takeover of Palestine in 63 BC. It is into this political climate that Christ was born in Bethlehem. Witherington contends vigorously for the historicity of the Lukan account of Christ's birth, and that the story of Jesus' birth bears little resemblance to the birth stories of the pagan gods. Ben also demonstrates that it must have happened around 5 or 6 BC. He also discusses the Sicarii (the dagger men), showing the likelihood of their existence prior to the reign of Nero in the 60's AD. He discusses the Pharisees and the Sadducees and their response to the ministry of Jesus. There is also an irenic discussion of the last week of Jesus' life, and Ben discusses how people were crucified in the ancient world, and he adds the interesting tidbit that crucifixion may have been inaugurated as a Jewish form of punishment that was utilized and adopted by the Romans. Dr. Witherington also defends the essential historicity of the gospel descriptions of the last week of Christ, as well as the unlikelihood of anyone fabricating a resurrection story where the women believe it and the men don't. There is also a lengthy discourse on Paul's three missionary journeys and how they comport with what we know from Paul's letters, particularly in the book of Galatians. Witherington also reveals the essential anti-Semitic character of the Roman emperors, and how they tended to see Christianity as an offshoot of Judaism until perhaps the Neronian persecution of Christians in the early sixties AD. Ben holds that Mark was the first Gospel written, and that Matthew and Luke relied on Mark as a source. He also discusses the sad sack of Jerusalem by Titus and his legions in 70 AD, noting that while the Jewish forces put up a good fight for years, internal backbiting and conflicts between differing Jewish leaders helped to seal their doom. Ben is a sympathetic and compassionate guide through the last days of the Jewish nation as he somberly reports the suicide pact that was apparently made at Masada, save for the few who hid in a cistern and survived to tell the tale. Ben also mentions that most of the Christians had fled by the time Titus conquered Jerusalem, perhaps to the town of Pella. There are sections throughout the book where Ben discusses different topics, such as Magic in the Ancient World and the ransoming of souls. There are also capsule descriptions of towns and cities mentioned in the New Testament, as well as sidebar discussions on topics ranging from whether or not Mark is an ancient biography to whether or not Paul grew up in Tarsus or Jerusalem. The book is subtitled "A Narrative Account," and indeed, the book reads like an engaging story. You really get involved in the lives of those whose stories are told, and even more, you get caught up with the movements inherent in New Testament History. I highly recommend this book. I have read it two times, and I can't say that, (nor would I want to say that) about too many biblical studies books, tepid as they can be. But Ben is a great writer, and you will want this on your shelf and in your hands. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Three Stars By cok book, lots of background 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. New Testament History By Danny Cook I have been reading this book for a while now and I find it very informational but sometimes it raises more questions than it answers. But overall it has given me a better insight into the New Testament that I have not realized before. Understanding New Testament History is important in establishing a firm foundation on the truth of God's Word.

Essential to an understanding of the New Testament is a comprehension of the individuals, events, and social movements that shaped the setting from which Jesus and his followers emerged. Unfortunately, many accounts by historians can leave readers feeling overwhelmed and confused. New Testament History provides a worthy solution to this problem. A well-known expert on the social situation of the New Testament, Ben Witherington offers an engaging look into the world that gave birth to the Christian faith.

From Publishers Weekly Beginning with the introduction which eschews the usual John-vs.-the-Synoptics categorization of the Gospels in favor of a more nuanced approach, in which Luke's Acts is the historical sore thumb alongside the three Jesus biographies this primer on New Testament history tips some sacred cows while teaching students the basics. The textbook format is informative without being stuffy, augmented by sidebars, maps, illustrations and photographs of ancient sites and scrolls. This is a fine choice for undergraduates and lay church members, as well as more advanced students, who will most appreciate Witherington's sensitivity to the complexities of history. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Beginning with a prolegomenon that carefully defines history as well as the work of historians and biographers, Witherington sets aside the misconception that objectivity requires neutrality and, taking a cue from the author of Luke and Acts, weaves "an orderly account" that covers the period from Alexander the Great through the first century C.E. Witherington reads Luke and Acts and Josephus as reliable though hardly neutral historical sources and supplements them with an impressive array of primary and secondary material, beginning with the other Gospels, which he reads as instances of ancient biography. He is explicit about the choices he makes in reading sources, and the care with which he reveals his rationale for judgments about evidence is admirable and particularly welcome in an introductory text. Well-placed illustrations and maps, chronological tables, and a series of highlighted "closer looks" at key topics increase the volume's usefulness. In all, a readable one-volume overview of the historical context within which Christian scripture was formed, suitable for New Testament students in the academy and outside of it. Steven Schroeder Copyright American Library Association.

All rights reserved "This is a fine choice for undergraduates and lay church members, as well as more advanced students, who will most appreciate Witherington's sensitivity to the complexities of history."