



# A Reader's Guide to Bill O'Reilly's Killing Jesus

*Patrick Goggins*

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Two stories emerge when discussing Bill O'Reilly and Martin Dugard's *Killing Jesus: A History* (O'Reilly, 2013): one is narrative, the other is scriptural.

From a scriptural perspective, *Killing Jesus* is a retreat back to the so-called "second quest" studies of the historical Jesus. First quest studies were fantastic narratives, loosely based on fact. In second quest studies like *Killing Jesus*, the author defers to the canonical gospels. In third quest studies such as Reza Aslan's *Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth* (Aslan, 2013), the author may defer to non-canonical works, both contemporary and modern. The result is that the Jesus of Nazareth depicted in *Killing Jesus* differs little from the Jesus depicted in the bible, which is likely how O'Reilly's readers would prefer to know Jesus. As a result, *Killing Jesus* is a successful exercise in worldview maintenance.

From a narrative perspective, *Killing Jesus* is a testosterone-fueled romp through first century Judea, complete with whips, prostitutes, pederasts, STDs, belly dancers, corrupt officials and tragic endings. Children are hacked to death, slaves are cast off cliffs for fun, brothers steal from brothers. This is not the reverential stuff one typically sees in a story about the historical Jesus, but this is Bill O'Reilly, who is to Fox News what Hunter Thompson was to *Rolling Stone* magazine.

This guide has three parts. Part I is a detailed discussion of some of the more controversial passages in *Killing Jesus*. Part II is a survey of some of the early criticism of the book. Part III is an independent criticism of *Killing Jesus*.

**SPOILER ALERT!** This guide discusses many of O'Reilly and Dugard's observations and conclusions. If you are reading or intend to read *Killing Jesus*, do yourself a favor, close this window, open a second tab, and purchase the book.

Also, as a preface, please note that this guide will refer to O'Reilly as the author of *Killing Jesus*. Clearly, Dugard did most of the actual research and writing. His omission here is not a slight, it simply acknowledges the reality that the book would not have the high profile it now has without O'Reilly's imprimatur. *Killing Jesus* is currently #2 on the *New York Times*' combined print and e-book non-fiction list.

Also please note this guide is of the original edition of the book, a new "unabridged" version is currently available.

Bible citations are to the New Revised Standard Version.

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