

Check-in

- * This week: (1) Name? (2) Why this class?
- * Follow-up on last week
 - * “Aha moments”
 - * Questions
 - * Comments
 - * Reflections

What Did Jesus Really Say & Do —“According to” *Matthew*?

- * March 12 - April 16, 2019
- * 10:00am - 11:30am
- * ~4 chapters/week

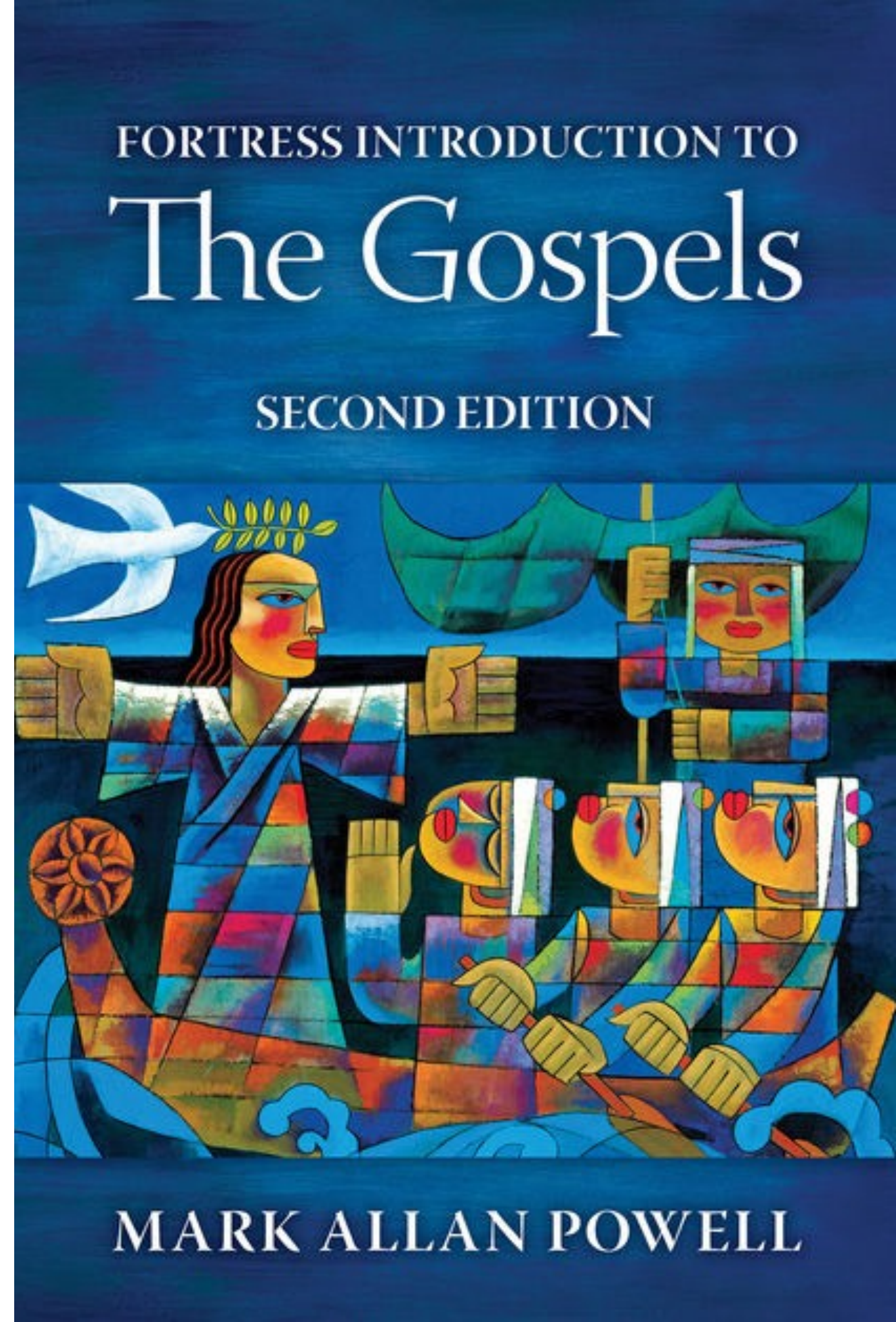
What Did Jesus Really Say & Do —“According to” *Matthew*?

- * Each Gospel has the interesting phrase “according to” in its title.
- * Learn how scholars determine the historical Jesus's authentic words and deeds from those categorized as “possible,” “unlikely,” or “implausible.”
- * How is the story different according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John?

What Did Jesus Really Say & Do —“According to” *Matthew*?

1. Learn about the Quest for the Historical Jesus
2. Practice close readings of the biblical text
3. Discover some of the major points of interpretation that scholars debate.
4. Be better equipped to do this sort of interpretation on your own in the future.

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- Mark: **shortest** of the four canonical Gospels
 - Read in ~90 minutes start to finish.
 - Narrative style moves at a rapid clip.
 - One of Mark's favorite words is "immediately" (42 times)



Mark 1

- After Jesus' baptism, "The Spirit *immediately* drove him out into the wilderness.
- After Jesus first meets the first set of his soon-to-be disciples, they "*immediately* they left their nets and followed him."
- When Jesus meets the second set of soon-to-be disciples, "*Immediately* he called them...."

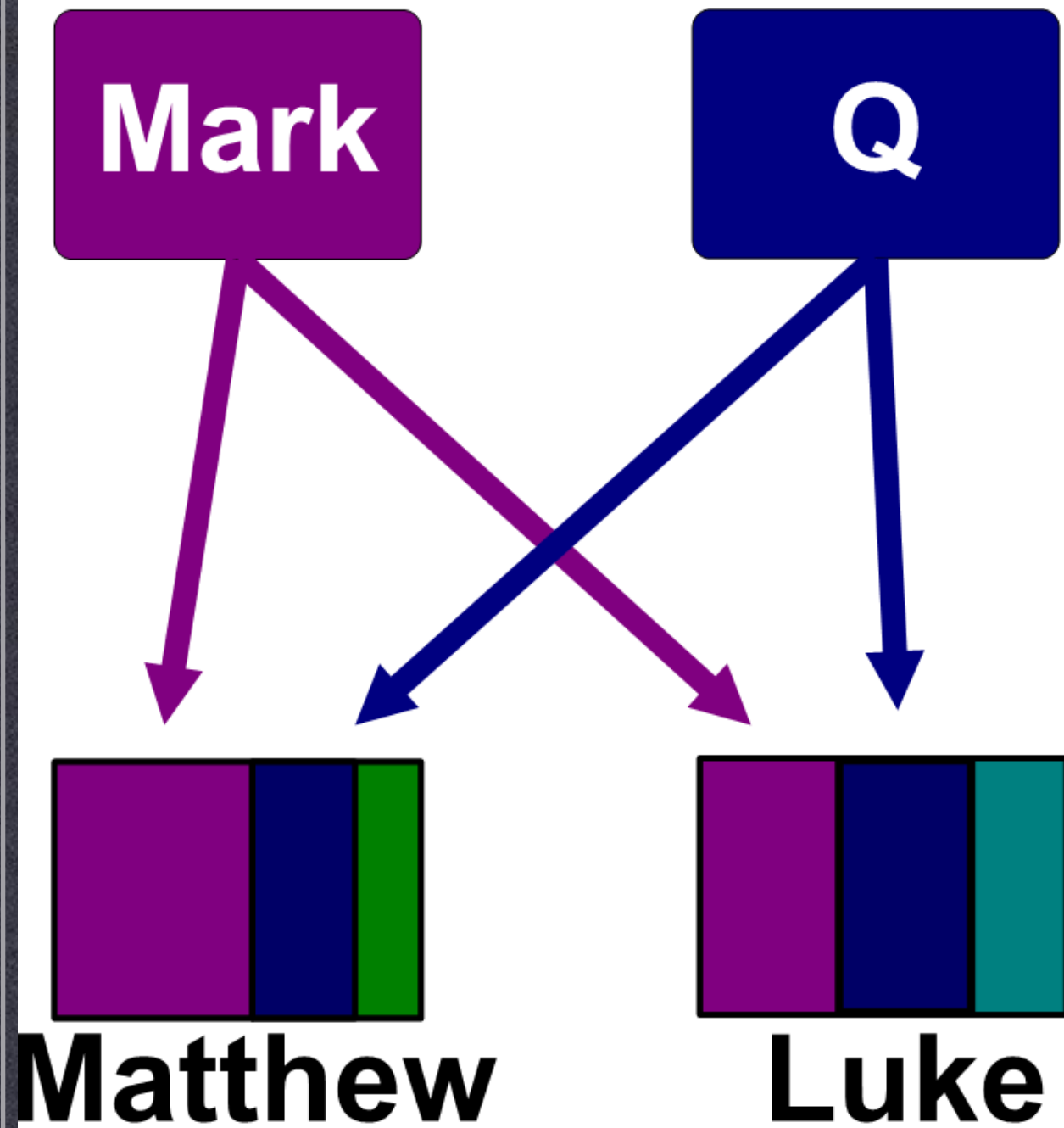
Mark 1: With all these events happening *immediately*

- We blaze through the ministry of John the Baptizer
- Jesus' baptism,
- Temptation in the desert,
- Beginning of Jesus's Galilean ministry,
- Calling of the first disciples,
- Jesus' first exorcism,
- Healing of Peter's mother-in-law,
- Further exorcism and healing of a whole crowd of folks outside Peter's mother-in-law's house,
- Jesus praying alone by himself,
- Preaching tour in Galilee,
- Final cleansing of a leper for good measure.

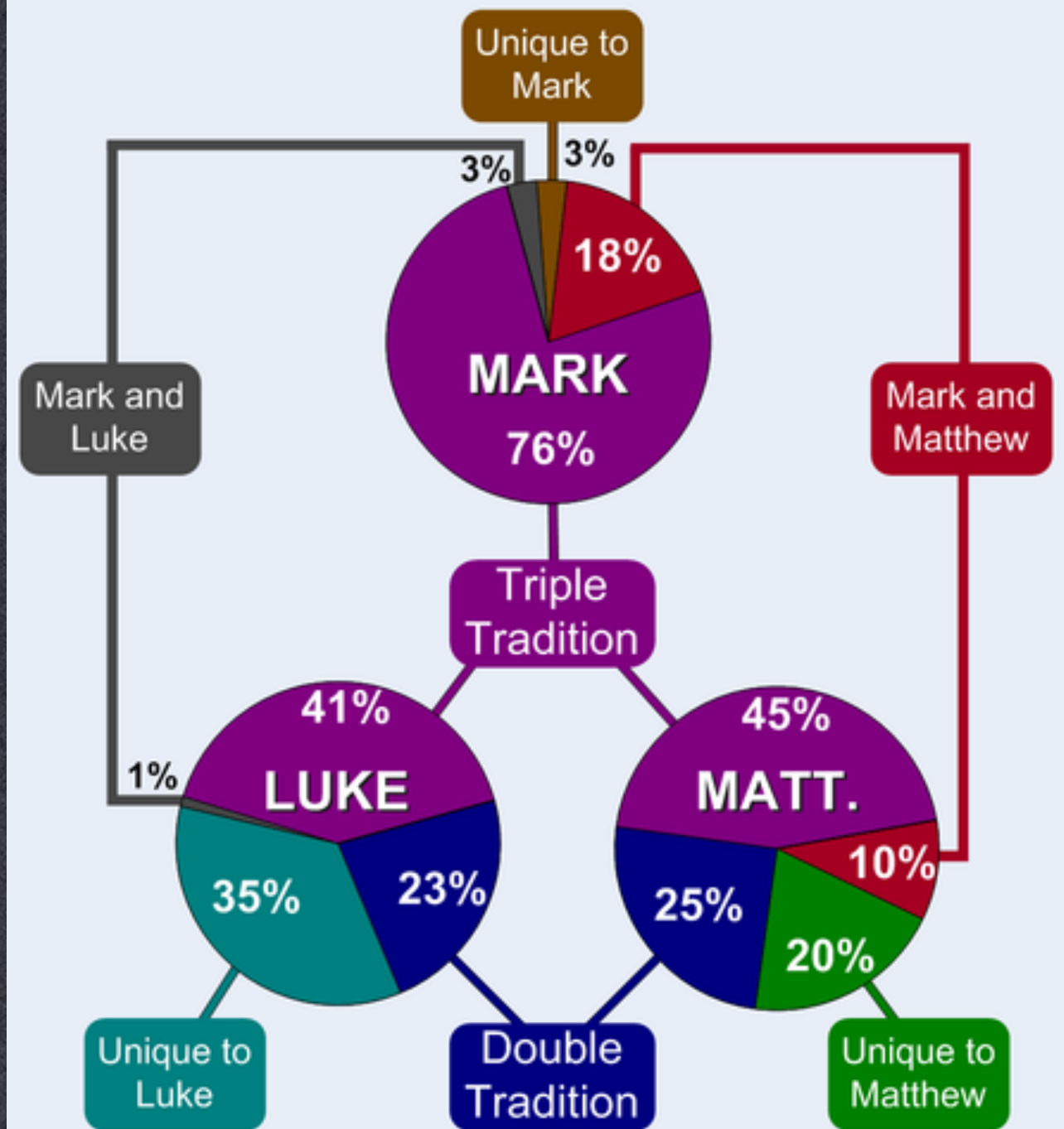
Matthew 1 (in contrast)

- Jesus is barely born by the end of Matthew's first chapter,
- Matthew (28 chapters) vs. Mark (16 chapters)
- Matthew is ~50% longer than Mark.
- Both Matthew and Luke had copies of Mark on their desks when they were writing their respective Gospels.
- Both Matthew and Luke adapted, edited, and supplemented Mark's Gospel for their particular communities — and then added their unique material.

Two-source Hypothesis



Relationships between the Synoptic Gospels



SYNOPTIC PROBLEM

Mark & Matthew

- Mark is a “wartime Gospel,” written around the year 69 CE, in the middle of the Roman-Jewish War, which lasted from around 66-73.
- The seriousness of the Roman-Jewish War is seen in that not long after the writing of Mark’s Gospel around July or August of the year 70, the Romans, in retaliation to the Jewish uprising, destroyed the Second Jerusalem Temple, the only remnants of which remain are today called the “Wailing Wall.”
- Matthew — and Luke as well — write more than a decade later, likely in the 80s of the first-century.

Matthew 1: The Fathers (& Mothers!) of Jesus

- **Matrilineal genealogy:** <https://claudemariottini.com/2015/05/13/the-genealogy-of-jesus-according-to-his-great-grandmothers/>
- **Traditional:** one man after another, father after father after father — with almost no mention of women, wives, or mothers
- In the middle of this 17 verse recitation of patriarchs, a few women are thrown in — at first seemingly at random: “and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah **by Tamar** . . . and Salmon the father of Boaz **by Rahab**, and Boaz the father of Obed **by Ruth** . . . and David was the father of Solomon **by the wife of Uriah**...and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of **Mary**, of whom Jesus was born.”
- Of all the matriarchs to highlight in this long list of forty-two generations, these five women and mothers are not what you might call the most obvious choices.

Matthew 1: The Fathers (& Mothers!) of Jesus

- In Genesis 38, Judah mistakes his daughter-in-law **Tamar**, the widow of Judah's eldest son Er, for a prostitute. She conceives the twins Perez and Zerah, after Er's brother fails to perform his duty of producing children with her....
- Levirate marriage commandment (Deuteronomy 25:5-6):
“When brothers reside together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go in to her, taking her in marriage, and performing the duty of a husband's brother to her, and the firstborn whom she bears shall succeed to the name of the deceased brother, so that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.”

Matthew 1: The Fathers (& Mothers!) of Jesus

- **Rahab**, in Joshua 2, was a Canaanite prostitute who provided protection for Joshua's spies on the edge of the city of Jericho.....

Matthew 1: The Fathers (& Mothers!) of Jesus

- **Ruth** was a Moabite (they originated from Lot's incest with his daughter) who, despite Moses' decrees, became part of God's people through marriage to Boaz.
- On Lot's incest, see Genesis 19:30-38.
- On "Moses' decrees" against the Moabites (Deuteronomy 23:3): "No Ammonite or Moabite shall be admitted to the assembly of the Lord. Even to the tenth generation, none of their descendants shall be admitted to the assembly of the Lord...."

Matthew 1: The Fathers (& Mothers!) of Jesus

- The genealogy does not name Bathsheba, but in referring to her as **the wife of Uriah**, it underlines both David's terrible abuses of power in his acts of adultery and murder, and Uriah's Gentile identity as a Hittite.
- On "Uriah's Gentile identity as a Hittite," see 2 Samuel 11-12.

Matthew 1: The Fathers (& Mothers!) of Jesus

- **Mary** gives birth to Jesus, conceived of the Holy Spirit while she was betrothed to Joseph.
- On Mary and Joseph, see Matthew 1:18-25.

Matthew 1: The Fathers (& Mothers!) of Jesus

- Having pointed out some of the dirty laundry in the small handful of patriarchs named in Jesus' genealogy, I should hasten to add that there are plenty of sins to go around regarding the many more men named:
- The unscrupulous but entertaining Jacob won his position in the line that leads to Jesus by lying and cheating his blind father;
- David the ruthless and highly successful bandit, unites the tribes of Israel through intrigue and murder;
- Rehoboam son of Solomon loses most of David's gains through arrogance and greed;
- Ahaziah son of Ahab continued his father's ways as a sadistic mass murderer....
- [T]hings only get relatively better with the exile partly because the line of kings ends or at least we do not know their names.

Matthew 1: The Fathers (& Mothers!) of Jesus

- What are we to do with the less-than-spotless background of Jesus' ancestors?
- Christian ethicist Stanley Hauerwas invites us to consider that our hope — given Jesus' genealogy — is, ironically and unexpectedly, the clear, harsh and abundant truth that, “Jesus did not belong to the nice clean world of middle-class respectability, but rather he ‘belonged to a family of murders, cheats, cowards, adulterers and liars.’”
- No matter who you are, what you've done, or who your family is, you can help birth new life, new love, and new hope in the world — through acting for peace and justice.

Matthew 2: Listening to God in Your Dreams

- **12** [H]aving been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, [the magi from the East] left for their own country by another road.
- **13** Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him....”
- **19** When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said,

Matthew 2: Listening to God in Your Dreams

- **20** “Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead.”
- **21** Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel.
- **22** But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee.
- **23** There he made his home in a town called Nazareth...

Matthew 2: Listening to God in Your Dreams

- There is a lot of dreaming going on in Matthew chapter two: a lot of dreams and a lot of dreamers.
- First dreamers are the magi.
- They listened to their dreams, and “left for their own country by another road.”

Matthew 2: Listening to God in Your Dreams

- Other three dreams are Joseph's: he responds to all three.
- First he is told to flee with Mary and Jesus to Egypt to avoid Herod's murderous wrath.
- After Herod's death, another dream instructs Joseph to return to Israel.
- But instead of returning to Bethlehem, where Herod's son and successor Archelaus might discover their return, the Holy Family make a new home for themselves in Nazareth.
- All told, the main characters in Matthew 2 make some serious, tumultuous geographic moves based on their dreams.

Matthew 2: Listening to God in Your Dreams

- Third dream is in Matthew's first chapter.
- Joseph discovers that his fiancé was pregnant without his involvement, a dream warned him, not only that he should still marry her, but also that, "It's a boy!" and that they should name him Jesus.
- There is a lot of dreaming going on in the opening chapters of Matthew: a lot dreams and a lot of dreamers.

Matthew 2: Listening to God in Your Dreams

- It makes sense that the magi would be associated with dreams and dream interpretation.
- When Matthew refers to “Magi from the east,” he likely means members of a priestly caste of the Medes and Persians — from the area of modern day Iran.
- These magi were likely Zoroastrians — a religion that predates Christianity by many centuries — who specialized in various forms of soothsaying or divination, ranging from astrological interpretation (such as following the sign of the star over the stable in Bethlehem where Jesus was born) to dream interpretation.

Extra-biblical References to Magi

- Roman senator and historian Tacitus generally dismisses the magi's claims to supernatural knowledge and powers as "absurdities."
- Roman Stoic philosopher Seneca laughs at the astrologers who predicted the Roman Emperor Claudius' death "every year, every month" only to have the prophecies proved false when Claudius continued to live.
- Roman author Pliny the Elder wrote that he intends to "refute the fraudulent lies of the magi."
- Greek sophist philosopher Philostratus found it necessary to defend his fellow philosopher Apollonius of Tyana against the insulting charge that he is a "magus."

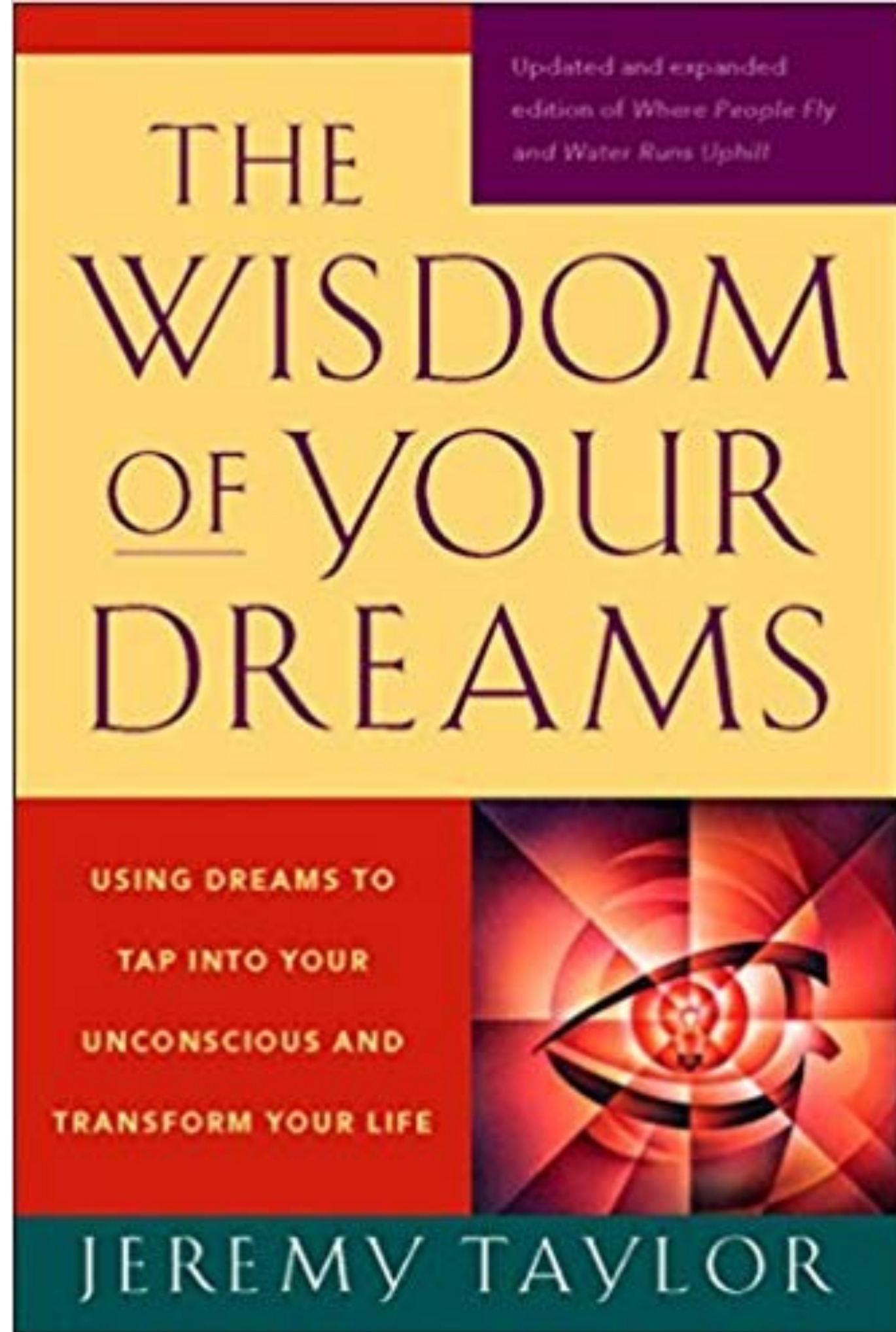
Extra-biblical References to Astrology

- Roman Emperor Nero is alarmed at a comet's appearance "because it is commonly believed to portend the death of great rulers."
- Roman poet Juvenal uses poetic verse to attack a woman who gossips about a comet threatening the kings of Armenia and Parthia.
- Emperor Tiberius expels astrologers from Rome in 19 C.E., as do Vespasian and Domitian toward final third of the first century.

Negative Parallels

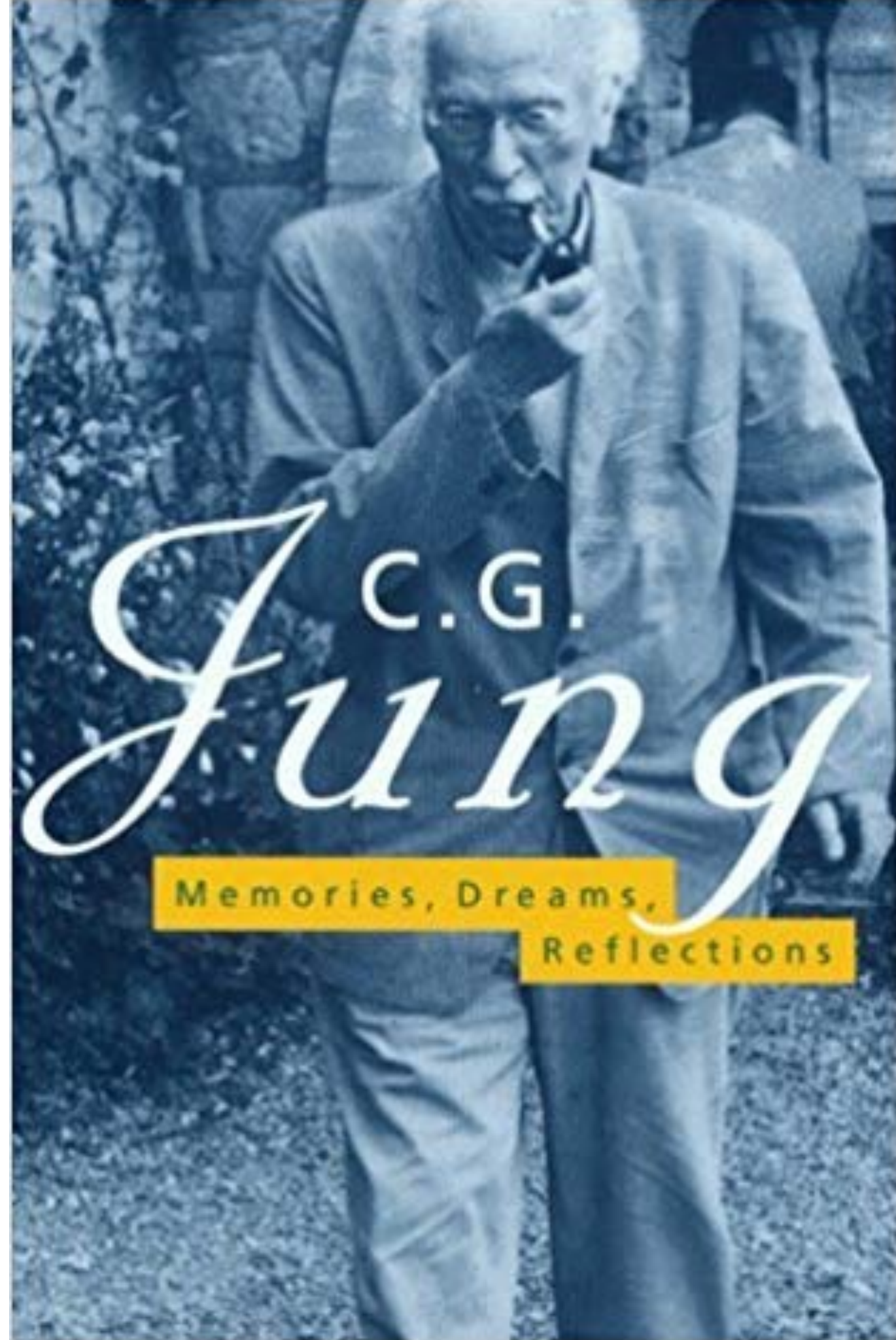
- Harold Camping, led an unknown number of his radio listeners to believe that Saturday, May 21, 2011 would be the end of the world — even though Camping already erred once in publishing a book that said the apocalypse was coming back in 1994.
- As recently as March 26, 1997, the thirty-nine members of the Heaven's Gate cult committed suicide because the false prophet and would-be modern magi-like figure Marshall Applewhite led them to believe that killing themselves would help them board an alien UFO connected with the Hale-Bopp comet.

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- Third-century Rabbi Hisda: “A dream uninterpreted is like a letter unopened.”
 - [a letter from whom?!]
 - Story: DASD roommate
 - “If this were my dream....”
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Scientific Sleep Studies

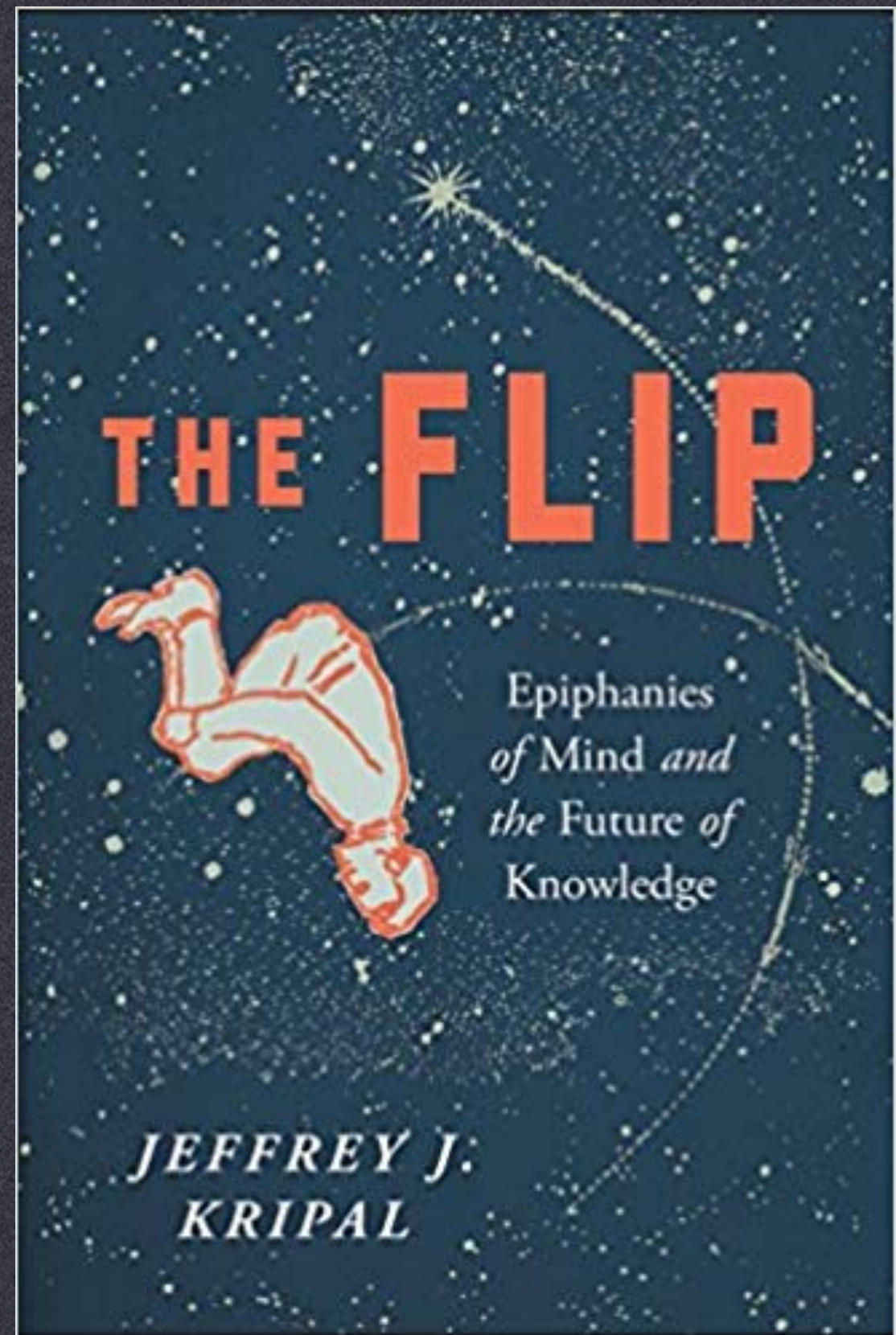
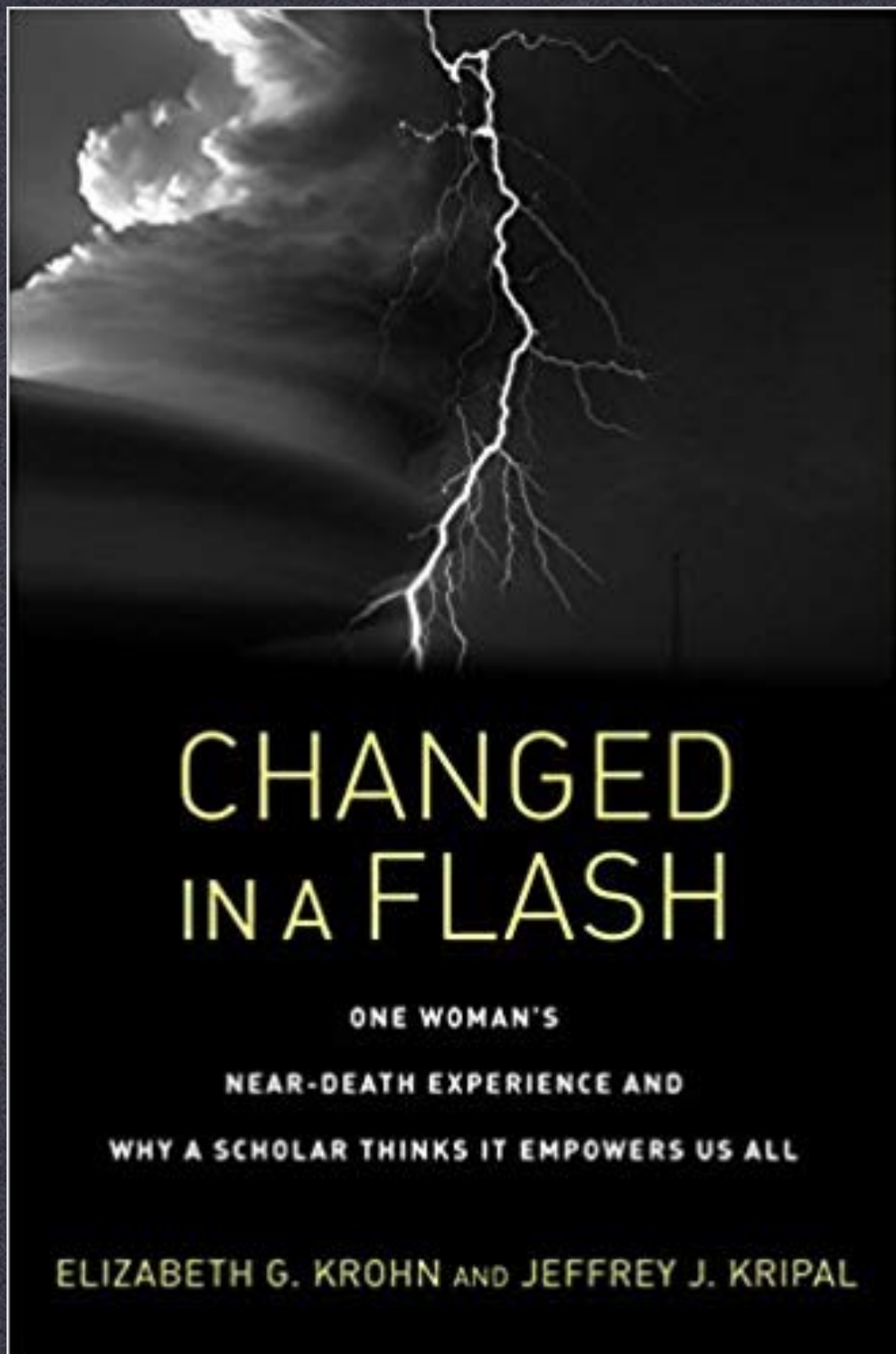
- Almost everyone dreams, but not everyone remembers their dreams.
- Best practice in starting to remember your dream is to become *intentional* about doing dream work.
- Put a pen and pad of paper beside your bed, and before going to sleep each night explicitly state your intention — either silently or aloud — that you want to remember your dream.
- Then, write your dream down as soon as you wake up because the details of dreams most often fade quickly.



TTAQ:

Title, Theme, Affect, Question.

- When you have time either immediately or later in the day, review your initial notes about your dream, then ask yourself,
- **“What ‘Title’ does this dream want itself to have?”** Allow your mind to free associate, and try not to censor yourself. Do this quickly.
- **Write out your dream more expansively in first-person, present tense** to help yourself reenter your dream as it originally happened.
- **Theme:** major patterns or issues which surfaced in the dream.”
- **Affect:** “dominant feeling or emotional energy experienced.”
- **Question:** “What central question is my dream inviting me to reflect or focus upon?”



RICE UNIVERSITY

Harold Camping, John the Baptizer, & Jesus: We Are The Ones We've Been Waiting For (Matthew 3)

- **1** In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, **2** "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."
- **3** This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'"
- **4** Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.
- **5** Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, **6** and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.
- **7** But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

Harold Camping, John the Baptizer, & Jesus: We Are The Ones We've Been Waiting For (Matthew 3)

- **8** Bear fruit worthy of repentance. **9** Do not presume to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our ancestor"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.
- **10** Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.
- **11** "I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. **12** His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."
- **13** Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him.

Harold Camping, John the Baptizer, & Jesus: We Are The Ones We've Been Waiting For (Matthew 3)

- Abrupt break between Matthew's second and third chapters.
- Mt 2: ends with Joseph and Mary ushering the boy Jesus out of Egypt and into a new home in Nazareth.
- Mt 3: Very next verse, suddenly decades have inexplicably passed and both Jesus & John the Baptizer are adults.
- Questions:
 - What was Jesus' childhood like?
 - How did Jesus decide to be baptized by John??
 - What happened to Joseph and Mary?

Why did Matthew skip Jesus's childhood?

- One possibility: he may not have known any stories about the early period in Jesus' life.
- Another possibility: part of Matthew's editorial goal of paralleling the lives of Jesus and Moses.
- Exodus 2 skips unexpectedly
 - from Moses as a baby being rescued by Pharaoh's daughter
 - to Moses as an adult killing an Egyptian who was attacking one of his Hebrew kinsfolk.

John the Baptizer

- For whatever reason, in Mt 3, we find ourselves in the wilderness of Judea with the camel-hair wearing, locust-eating, no-holds-barred prophet John the Baptizer.
- Although John was surely an imposing presence, he was popular.
- “The people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.”

CLEAR CHANNEL

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Bible
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It

Judgment Day

May 21, 2011

...Cry mightily unto God

Jonah 3:8

Mon - Fri Live Open Forum
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001882

Apocalypticism, then &
now can be popular

from JtB to Harold Camping

John the Baptizer's Apocalyptic Language

- You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit worthy of repentance.....
- Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.
- I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals.
- He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.

John the Baptizer's Apocalyptic Language

- verse 13, immediately after all of John's apocalyptic imagery, "Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him."
- Inspired Jesus to join John's apocalyptic Baptism movement.
- All four canonical Gospels record that Jesus was baptized by John
- All four skip over so much of Jesus' childhood and early adulthood, why not simply begin with Jesus' temptation in the desert or the first teaching and healing of his public ministry?

John the Baptizer's Apocalyptic Language

- Why begin with the potentially awkward and easily misunderstood act of Jesus joining the crowds being baptized by John and confessing their sins?
- One possibility: Jesus' experience of being a disciple of John the Baptizer was a significant part of his emerging self-identity and vocational discernment.
- After John was arrested and later killed, Jesus had to discern his own unique calling by God that was separate and distinct from the Baptism Movement of John.

John Dominic Crossan

- John's Baptism movement: the end of the world is coming "soon, violently, and literally."
- **"John doesn't BAPTIZE in the Jordan. John baptizes in the *JORDAN!*"**
- Symbolic, ritualistic reenactment of the Wilderness Wanderings and Conquest narratives of the Hebrew Bible.
- Roman as the new Canaanites.
- How did Joshua enter and conquer the Promised Land? By crossing the Jordan River.

John Dominic Crossan

- John hopes that a critical mass of people purifying themselves through baptism and confession of sin will convince God that Israel is worthy of God intervening to restore Israelite control of the Promised Land.
- But like Harold Camping and so many others, John's predictions didn't come true.
- The Romans remained in power, and John was executed by Herod Antipas.

John Dominic Crossan

- **“John had a monopoly, but Jesus had a franchise.”**
- When John was beheaded, the Baptism Movement died with him.
- In contrast, Jesus never set up camp in one particular place.
- He and his followers were continually on the move: teaching, healing, and building community through inclusive table fellowship.
- When Jesus was executed by Rome, Jesus’ “Kingdom Movement” of building the Beloved Community did not die as well, but expanded and has continued to evolve.

John Dominic Crossan

- Whereas John's Baptism Movement hoped for an end of the word that was "soon, violent, and literal,"
- **Jesus' vision was much more collaborative, nonviolent, and hopeful for repairing this world** not replacing or abandoning our current state of existence.
- John to Jesus: "***from* imminent divine intervention *to* present divine-human collaboration.**"
- **"The Second Coming of Christ is what will happen when we Christians finally accept that the First Coming was the Only Coming and start to cooperate with its divine presence."**

John Dominic Crossan

- Instead of trying to keep ourselves washed and pure while waiting on God to act (like John the Baptizer)
- or calculating the date of God's Judgment Day (like Harold Camping),
- the way of Jesus invites us to realize, as the old saying goes, that, "We are the ones we've been waiting for!"

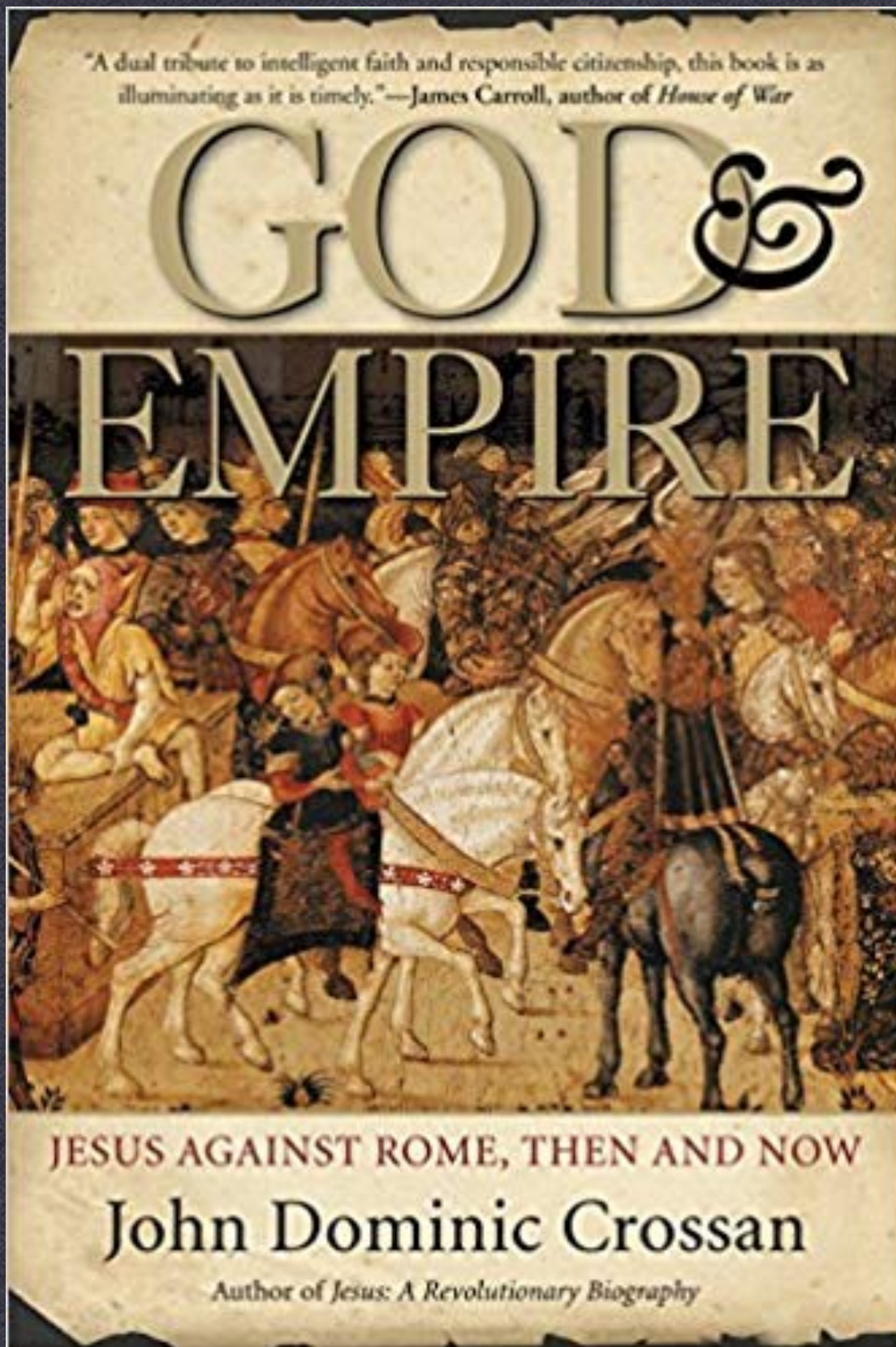
Harold Camping (1921 - 2013)

- Maybe delusional enough to believe his own nonsense?
- NPR interview with one of his followers, 27-year-old Adrienne Martinez, her husband Joel, and their two-year-old daughter. Adrienne was eight-months pregnant with their second child.
- After converting to Camping's worldview, they "budgeted everything so that, on May 21, [they wouldn't] have anything left."
- Camping has not divested his own savings, and refused to return donations in the wake of his failed prediction: "We're not at the end. Why would we return it?"

Leaving behind “Left Behind” Theology

- Chapters: “Let’s Be Alert and Ready,” “Warning Signs of Christ’s Return,” “The Rapture,” “The Antichrist,” “The Great Tribulation,” and “Armageddon and the Second Coming of Christ.”
- violent, fear-based, and riddled with anxiety
- from “working out my salvation with fear & trembling” to “working out our salvation with hope and trust.”





The Apocalyptic Jesus

A Debate



Dale C. Allison
Marcus J. Borg
John Dominic Crossan
Stephen J. Patterson

Robert J. Miller editor

FOR FURTHER STUDY