

This novel will be a special blessing for readers who seek an imaginative and comprehensive picture of the historical Jesus. The author roots his story in the canonical Gospels, but expands it in a way that would make Marcus Borg smile. We will meet some familiar characters like John the Baptist and Judas Iscariot. But we will also meet and be captivated by some unforgettable personalities, as well, like the well-to-do Seti of Sepphoris and the charming and benevolent Lady Calpurnia of Alexandria, both of whom lay key roles in Maddox's delightful vision of the Jesus about whom we yearn to know so much more.

Dr. Tony M. Martin, Professor of Biblical Studies (Retired),  
Mary-Hardin Baylor University, Belton, Texas

In his novel, *Jesus of Nazareth and the Kingdom of Weeds*, Robert Maddox gives us an imaginative, expansive and at times provocative representation of Jesus the man. Here, Jesus is obviously extraordinary, but has become so as he embraced both the joys and vicissitudes of life during a particularly turbulent and violent time in Jewish/Imperial Roman history. This two-volume novel is a vivid and poignant story of a man full of God who continues to compel millions to seek the purpose and meaning of what it is to be human.

Rev. Jill Johnson, Minister in Discernment,  
United Church of Christ, Baltimore, Maryland

My Catholic grandmother and my Baptist grandfather shared very few doctrinal convictions. What they did share was the story of Jesus. With his telling of the Jesus story, Robert Maddox fashions an engaging narrative that both of my grandparents nurtured in me. Now, the author gifts us with this breathtaking view of that human story.

Dr. William B. Rogers, Professor of Religious Education (Retired),  
Charlotte, North Carolina

The story of Jesus is perhaps the world's most influential story. But the gospels that tell us that story are limited. Glimpses. With this novel, Bob Maddox offers us insights, guesses and imaginative journeys into the full life of Jesus. With scholarship, history and lyricism Bob invites us to see a Jesus of flesh, blood, family, friends, pain, pathos and joy.

Rev. Dr. Timothy Tutt, Senior Minister,  
Westmoreland Congregational United Church of Christ, Bethesda, Maryland

JESUS OF NAZARETH AND THE KINGDOM OF WEEDS

*a Novel*

Book Two

**The Kingdom  
of Weeds**

Robert L. Maddox

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All scripture quotations are free renderings by the author inspired by the  
Revised Standard Version of scripture.

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# Foreword

I am heavily indebted to many scholars of the Jesus Seminar, especially Robert Funk, Marcus Borg, and Jon Dominic Crossan, as I wrote this book over the past twenty-five years. For most of my earlier professional life, I had hunches that Jesus of Nazareth had much to offer me that the Gospels omitted, but I did not know how to fill in those blanks. When I encountered the women and men of the Jesus Seminar and their compelling, respectful scholarship on the Jesus of history, I found the Jesus I was looking and longing for. These two volumes present an earnest and reverent attempt to use my tutored imagination to walk with Jesus of Nazareth, carefully and joyfully filling in some of the historic gaps that bring Jesus much more to life for me.

I am further grateful to Linda Maddox and Rev. Dr. Tim Tutt, who hung with me through the quarter century it took to write and rewrite this story. I am deeply indebted to Dr. Bill Rogers and Rev. Jill Johnson for over-the-top encouragement in this final effort. Words cannot convey my profound appreciation to Dr. Tony Martin, a friend of sixty years, a gifted New Testament scholar, for expert advice, line-by-line reading and careful editing. Tucker Ball and Ferew Haile are my IT gurus. Dr. John Pierce and Lex Horton of Nurturing Faith guided me in the publication that resulted in volumes one and two.

The anonymous authors of the four New Testament Gospels (from about 70 CE to maybe 100 CE) were not much interested in an extensive biography of Jesus. They wanted to celebrate what they regarded as Adonai's wondrous act of grace in sending Jesus into the world as Adonai's ultimate demonstration of love. Though the New Testament opens with the four Gospels, it is important to etch into the reader's mind that the Jesus movement had been in formation at least four decades when Mark's Gospel, the first one, made its way into a Jesus group in Galilee, Jesus's homeland. The Jesus movement as it unfolded, pointed to by Paul's letters (beginning in the 50s CE), created the Gospels, not the other way around.

The Gospels are magnificent, classic, world-shaping, reverent sketches of Jesus of Nazareth, who, to his followers, became the Christ. The Gospels have many tantalizing gaps in the story of the Jesus who lived, walked, and loved among family members, Galilean friends, and tyrannical religious and political systems. The Gospels are essentially memories of memories of a cadre of devoted followers of Jesus. That said, the four Gospels are all we have of the telling of the

Jesus of Nazareth story from about 4 BCE to about 30 CE. Through careful, reverent, well-researched twenty-first-century flights of informed imagination, I aim to fill in some of the historical blanks in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, this unique person, in the words of John Shelby Spong, “full of God.”

Volume one imagines the *Αρχή* (beginning) of Jesus of Nazareth. Volume two trumpets the call of Jesus to serve his beloved kingdom of weeds. As the late Marcus Borg had a way of saying, “It may not have happened exactly this way, but it’s true anyway.” Meet Jesus again for the first time as he grew and served among God’s beloved “weeds” in his own time.