

An Opened Grave: Sherlock Holmes Investigates His Ultimate Case

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“Looking through my notebook,” says Dr. John H. Watson, “I can easily find a dozen intriguing cases that justify the time and effort it would take to commit them to paper. However, all of these impressive triumphs pale by comparison to the incident I am about to unfold.”

So begins the recounting of an incredible journey. After a miraculous rescue from certain death, the world’s greatest detective sets out to investigate the world’s greatest mystery. Sherlock Holmes, master of logic and deductive reasoning, takes on the fundamental Christian belief that Jesus was the Son of God and rose from the dead. Mere blind faith is not sufficient for his calculating mind. Armed with his extraordinary ability to process astounding amounts of research data, Holmes realizes that the mystery can only be solved by visiting the “scene of the crime,” as it were.

Due to the passing of so many centuries, however, that trail is impossibly cold, so Holmes devises a scheme to actually visit Jerusalem during the critical events. Naturally, he calls on his good friend, Watson, to accompany him on the journey of a lifetime.

What follows is as much a spiritual quest as it is an adventurous trek in the first century. Interspersing pithy philosophical exchanges between the two main characters with rollicking action sequences, the author crafts a compelling tale.

James writes in the style made famous by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of the original Holmes stories. Watson narrates the story, for example, and often invokes scenes from well-known adventures he and Holmes have had in previously published works, such as *The Sign of Four* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. The reader can easily get lost in the unique plot and forget that Conan Doyle did not actually pen this story.

A pastor at a Presbyterian church in Roseville, California, James also has an MFA degree in theater and drama from UCLA and worked for a time in theater. Here, he makes fine use of these talents. For instance, he has Watson play the role of a Doubting Thomas to Holmes’ keen, logical exploration of the Christian mythos, to great theatrical effect. A brief exchange illustrates the tension that develops between the two men as they come to terms with the tenets of Christianity. Watson challenges: “You call yourself a man of reason, do you not? If you ask me, it is absurd to even consider that this Jesus figure is the true way to find, if there is such a thing, the afterlife ... You are beginning to sound like a clergyman, not a detective.”

Holmes responds with a question: “Am I?” Anyone who loves Sherlock Holmes detective stories or who would like to share a sharp intellect’s grappling with the profoundest of religious mysteries will enjoy and learn from this book. (August 18, 2009)

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