

The Making of the Lamb

Robert Harley Bear

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Bear imagines a teenage Jesus in this exquisitely penned, believable coming-of-age tale.

In *The Making of the Lamb*, masterful storytelling by Robert Harley Bear vividly brings to life an ancient legend that Jesus Christ traveled to southwest Britain as a teenager*.*

It has long been said throughout the region that Jesus and his great-uncle, tin trader Joseph of Arimathea, arrived soon after the biblical account of the twelve-year-old Christ in the Jerusalem temple. That scene, where Jesus's parents find him in the temple after three days of searching, is the last biblical mention of Jesus until his public ministry begins around age thirty.

Where was he for eighteen years? Some say in India. Others insist he was in Britain.

Bear did his homework. The author vividly integrates historical details about the countryside of today's Cornwall, Somerset, and Wales, specifically places such as Looe, Pilton, Glastonbury, Rumps, and Priddy. He describes the surrounding islands, rocky cliffs, seas, and small waterways; explores the legend rooted in Celtic crosses that appear to bear the image of a young, tunic-clad Christ; and steeps the story in the political and religious era just preceding the Roman conquest of Britain and Rome's outlawing of the Druid religion.

To that historical backdrop, Bear brings the fictionalized teenage Christ.

Freed via fiction, not bound to pure fact as other treatises seeking to authenticate the legend, Bear allows himself to broadly imagine a young Christ. He paints a picture of a typical thirteen-year-old, his parents left back in Nazareth, who has embarked on a life-altering adventure with his great-uncle and Joseph's son, Daniel. And abundant adventure there is, accessibly scripted in a modern voice rather than in ancient verbiage, which would have bogged the story down.

Jesus and his companions face danger in stormy sea crossings, pirates, shipwrecks, and sword-slinging tribal warfare. There are new friends to be made—and new enemies—and Jesus and Daniel do practical work as well, learning how to mine tin and silver.

Bear's Jesus is impetuous, playful, brave, and deeply philosophical. Physical and spiritual growth occur as Jesus matures into a young man, compares his beliefs to that of the Druids, and ultimately must choose his destiny—peacefully live out his life in secluded Britain, or return to the Roman Empire to die on the cross to save humanity.

Jesus's recurring private conversations with God increase in intensity as the father gradually reveals to the son his potential destiny, leading to a final, powerful showdown. Jesus reacts as expected—with anger and anguish at the choices laid out before him. He is also shattered by the realization that he will not play the role he once hoped for, to conquer the Roman Empire and sit as an earthly king.

Rounding out the book are skillfully interspersed chapters that tell the fictional story of how the legend of Jesus's time in Britain was secretly recorded, hidden, and finally deciphered in the present day.

This is an exquisitely penned, believable coming-of-age tale. By the end, even biblical purists may have to pinch themselves to remember it's fiction.

KARYN SAEMANN (February 10, 2014)

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