



Year Zero

Jeff Long

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In his sensational novel *The Descent*, Jeff Long created a world of stunning terror and adventure, "an imaginative tour de force" (Jon Krakauer). Now he imagines a scenario so vivid, so haunting, it anchors his place among storytelling masters.

YEAR ZERO

An archaeological manhunt is raging in the holy land -- a hunt for the historical Jesus. For Nathan Lee Swift, a young American field researcher and expectant father, the line between noble discovery and the plunder of ruins is sacred -- until the night he crosses it. At a Roman landfill beneath the crucifixion grounds known as Golgotha, Nathan Lee yields to his professor's greed and turns common grave robber. His world -- his unborn daughter -- seems lost to him.

Hundreds of miles away, on the remote Greek island of Corfu, a wealthy collector pries open his latest black-market purchase -- a fourteen-inch holy relic containing a vial of blood dating back to the first century -- and unleashes a two-thousand-year-old plague. As the pandemic explodes from the Mediterranean basin and threatens to devour humankind, Nathan Lee gets a chance at redemption. He embarks on an Odyssean journey back to the United States to find his family.

Skirting the edges of the world, Nathan Lee's path finally leads him to New Mexico, where the greatest minds of science have converged at Los Alamos to find a vaccine. There Nathan Lee meets Miranda Abbot, a nineteen-year-old prodigy. As the cure continues to elude them, Miranda launches a desperate final strategy: the use of human lab rats cloned from the year zero. Nathan Lee, the thief of bones, comes face-to-face with men made from the very relics he looted, one of whom claims to be Jesus Christ, but may also be Patient Zero.

Combining the scientific precision of *The Andromeda Strain* with the intensity of classic adventure epics, Jeff Long takes readers on a riveting voyage through the rubble of earthquake-torn Jerusalem, the serenity of the high Himalayas, and the eerie sanctuary of Los Alamos. With Long's characteristic originality, *Year Zero* races against the apocalyptic clock, creating a maze of twists, astonishing atmosphere, and the clash of science and faith.

Year Zero Details

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Author : Jeff Long

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From Reader Review Year Zero for online ebook

Lou says

Ever since Jurassic Park I thought a book about the cloning of Jesus Christ coule be quite interesting. I was wrong ... sort of.

My major problem with this book was its misleading premise. The book makes you think you are getting a story about the cloning of Christ, but that is far from the truth. The overall book is a fine historical science fiction about an ancient plague re-released on an unsuspecting earth, but under the circumstances for which I picked it up I was extremely disappointed. I mean, the alleged cloned Christ doesn't even appear until near the end!

Had I no pretenses for a story about cloning Christ I probably would give this book 3 to 3.5 stars.

John says

This book started out okay. Every hundred pages of so it got a little worse. The last fifty pages were a chore. I found myself reading just for the sake of finishing. Don't bother with this one. Jeff Long has no ability to end a story. He's basically a Crichton wannabe. I won't be reading anything of his again. PU!

Brian Taylor says

It's time for another book review! How excited are you? Yeah, me too. Today I'll be reviewing Year Zero, by Jeff Long. You may also recognize Jeff as the author of The Descent, one of the most influential books on my budding writing career. Someday I will meet Mr. Long and we will talk...after I gush some. Right. I'm supposed to be reviewing a book. Here goes.

From the publisher:

An archaeological manhunt is raging in the holy land — a hunt for the historical Jesus. For Nathan Lee Swift, a young American field researcher and expectant father, the line between noble discovery and the plunder of ruins is sacred — until the night he crosses it. At a Roman landfill beneath the crucifixion grounds known as Golgotha, Nathan Lee yields to his professor's greed and turns common grave robber. His world — his unborn daughter — seems lost to him.

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If you've read *The Descent*, you'll probably like *Year Zero* as well. Mr. Long unleashes an ancient strain of virus on the modern world. Societies collapse, governments scramble, and people die. Whole countries perish—Greece, France, China. Eventually the US is left to search for a cure before the entire globe is infected. That was one of my pet peeves about this book. I thought some of the other countries would have tried a little harder to set up labs and brain trusts to combat the virus. I would have liked to have seen more of a shared global knowledge, instead of leaving most everything up to the US.

Anyway, the star of this story is Nathan Lee Swift. He's a man pushed to the shady side of archaeology by his brother-in-law, becoming nothing more than a grave robber and looter in order to support his new baby. With Nathan Lee, Mr. Long does a wonderful job creating a flawed, yet very human, character. I enjoyed following Nathan Lee across the globe as he desperately tried to get back to the US and his family only to run into roadblock after roadblock. He was an easy character to root for from the very beginning.

Our other main character is Miranda Abbott, the genius daughter of Dr. Paul Abbott. We first meet her as a rebellious teen who lives to thwart her father who has done nothing but feed her mind with the best tutors and mentors money can buy. Later she becomes an important figure in America's attempt at finding a cure, and Nathan Lee's life. Her character grew on me. Often times her youthful energy kept the moral high ground, the light shining in dark times. Which is funny because she's the one who comes up with cloning dead folks from two thousand years ago. Basically, she's a scientist with a heart...which gets her into trouble along the way.

This book takes on the always touchy subject of religion too. At first, the common people worship the plague victims thinking them to be angels. When the cloning begins, humanity can't help but wonder if one of them is the actual Jesus from the Bible. If you read any of the reviews for this book, you'll see plenty of people complain about the cloning and religious aspects of this book. I didn't have a problem with either. Mr. Long goes out of his way to show both the scientific and the religious aspects of everything in *Year Zero*. Not only that, but he does it in respectful and intelligent ways. You can tell he did tons of research.

For me, this book constantly got better. The beginning took a bit to get going, but that's to be expected with so many pieces needing attention and a world on the brink of destruction. Trust Mr. Long to take you where you need to go...until the end. Unfortunately, I felt the ending fizzled out instead of exploding in awesomeness. While there were satisfactory conclusions to most of the character and story arcs, the ending just sort of happened. It didn't feel satisfying.

If you're a fan of Jeff Long, quality thrillers, or great writing, this book will appeal to you. Be forewarned, Mr. Long has a tendency to take his readers on grand adventures. *Year Zero* is no different. Be sure to check

it out. You won't be sorry.

What I liked:

- Superb characters. Nathan Lee was an easy character to root for. I found myself wanting to see how his tale unfolded early on.
- The science behind the virus added layers to the story. It was easy to see Mr. Long took his time researching.
- The religious aspect was appealing in context to the story. I feel like Mr. Long took great care in incorporating a religious storyline, which is no small feat considering how fanatical people can be. I especially like how when the chips were down, even the most scientific minds turned to religion. Very believable.
- How big this story felt. Readers are taken to places like Nepal, China, and Russia. Did I believe the entire world was dying off? Yes. This is a grand story that affects billions of people. Apocalypse, anyone?
- The antagonists were just as believable as the protagonists. Brilliant minds are often egotistical and hardened. Readers believe these people would do anything to be the first to discover a cure, even murder and betrayal.
- I loved how this book challenges our idea of what it means to be human. I often found myself wondering what I would do in the face of tough choices like these characters. Do the ends justify the means in terms of searching for a cure? Would I put the needs of the human race before those of my family?
- The pace kept me turning pages long after I knew I should have been sleeping.

What I didn't like:

- It takes a bit for all the pieces to come into play. The beginning is a touch slow but not enough to make you want to stop reading.
- The ending fizzles out. While I didn't find it unsatisfactory, I would have liked it to flow more smoothly. After a certain key scene, the next thirty pages or so felt lacking.
- Nathan Lee reminded me a little too much of Ike from The Descent.
- I would have liked to see more of a global effort in finding a cure.

Overall: I'd give Year Zero four out of five stars. Top notch characters and plot lines make it an easy read. If religion is a touchy subject, you may want to steer clear. Although I believe Mr. Long does a fantastic job taking religious concepts and creating compelling fiction, others may take issue. With that being said, Year Zero is definitely worth your time and money.

Randy says

I read the back cover of this book at a newsstand in the Atlanta airport ... and had to have it. Seconds later I had it on my Kindle. Here's what caught my eye (from back cover) -

"In Jerusalem, an American archaeologist working on Project Year Zero -- the search for the historical Jesus -- crosses the line between science and theft when he helps plunder an old Roman landfill beneath the crucifixion grounds known as Golgotha. Nathan Lee Swift's crime will have devastating consequences. When an ancient relic is opened on the black market, a two-thousand-year-old plague is unleashed -- and the dying begins. As the pestilence threatens to wipe out humanity, he finds a chance for redemption -- by

finding the cure. Skirting the edges of civilization, Nathan Lee sets out to find his younger daughter and travels to Los Alamos, where a desperate tactic has been adopted: the use of human lab rats cloned from Project Year Zero remains. Now Nathan Lee will come face-to-face with one special cloned human who may hold the key to salvation -- in more ways than one. Patient Zero claims to remember who he is...."

So we have a devastating plague, archeological plundering, cloning, and the implication that Jesus Himself has been cloned (and remembers who He is). The potential controversy surrounding this book was irresistible to me...

But what was advertised, was not what was delivered. The first half of the book raced along like the sci fi thriller I expected, promising something deeper if I kept reading. Then, suddenly, I felt like I was reading a different book. The action dies out halfway through and Year Zero turns into a drama.

Of course, drama is not a bad thing, just not exactly what I expected. SO, I settled in figuring that this would be the way Long presented the idea of a cloned "Jesus" to the reader ... but he doesn't. In fact he doesn't really explore the idea at all. I won't get too detailed here, because I don't want to spoil the book for those of you that read it, but people reading Year Zero out of a What If curiosity (like me) will be let down by the way the plot unfolds.

To me, the whole cloned Jesus idea (although controversial) was the selling point of the book. I mean, come on, the title is Year Zero! Yet all the "cloned Jesus" grist for the mill is wasted, none of the potential is explored.

Aside from the somewhat false advertising, the action parts are really good and the drama parts from the second half of the book, though disconcerting, are also done well. If the book hadn't been titled "Year Zero" it wouldn't have been such a let down, but the switch from action to drama still would have been difficult to pull off.

The paperback version of Year Zero is 512 pages - not a brief read - so read at your own risk, but consider yourself warned.

Two Stars

Edward H. Busse, III says

NO SPOILERS!! Another winner from Jeff Long. Having read The Descent and Deeper, I was very much looking forward to this book...and I was not disappointed. Again, as with other books I've thoroughly enjoyed, I loved the premise of the story and the writing was excellent. The characters were well thought out and the story itself involved religion, politics, globalism, tragedy, hope, family and many more themes that were all interwoven extremely well by Mr. Long. The premise itself was pretty inventive/creative although I'm not sure really how far it is out of the realm of real scientific possibility...which itself is an unsettling thought. The author gave us just enough detail for the stories fundamental pieces to be believable...which isn't easy. BOTTOM LINE: this was an excellent book and continues the tradition of great story telling from Mr. Long.

Elizabeth Moreau Nicolai says

I LOVED this book. It features a series of characters with intertwining lives. One is an archaeologist who is in disfavor after a dig goes very wrong in Jerusalem. However when an antique collector opens a specimen from Biblical Time (the year zero, the time of Christ), he unleashes a plague. Soon most of the Earth is dead or dying and scientists are racing to save it with the help of some clones from the Golgotha mound in Jerusalem. It's fascinating and engrossing. Highly recommended because my review is not doing justice.

Paula says

Actually, I really enjoyed this book, although it was a little slow getting started. A plague is killing off the earth's population, and a group of scientists barricade themselves inside Los Alamos, NM to try to find a cure. They begin cloning human test subjects from DNA recovered from digs in Jerusalem, including some retrieved from blood drops on a splinter of wood. Low & behold, this particular clone claims to be Jesus! Makes for an interesting story, and a great ending!

Bodosika Bodosika says

Not too interesting...2star

Jim Wright says

Archaeological black market, Golgotha, plague, pestilence, human cloning, and desperation to save the human race will keep your eyes glued to this fast moving story. This is the first book I've read by Jeff Long, but now I want to rush out and buy everything he's written. His writing style is tight and fast paced and never seems to flag anywhere along the way. I can absolutely give this book my very highest recommendation!

K.M. Weiland says

The marketing for this book blaringly declares it a thriller—which frankly (with no disrespect intended to thrillers) does it a terrific disservice. This is not a thriller. This is an elegiac, literary, almost floatingly dreamy examination of humanity in a time of world-ending crisis (it reminded me, in a not-so-stark way, of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*). The writing is poetic and beautiful, the characters accurate without misstep, and storytelling as a whole a tremendous example in restraint and realism. That said, it's not a perfect book. The premise never quite meets the theme, and the entire Year Zero aspect and its religious and historical significance never quite come full circle in any deeply meaningful way. Still, it's an excellent book by a powerful author.

Seizure Romero says

Reading this was like waiting for a mystery package from UPS. I sat waiting for it to deliver on some fairly interesting ideas but we kept missing each other and I kept getting those damned yellow stickers and then when it all finally came together it turned out to be one of those nasty nut-covered cheese ball things dropped off by a guy wearing brown socks.

Randy says

Thriller with religious themes. A clone is grown from material found in an old bone, dated two thousand years, and the resurrecting human claims to be Jesus.

Gertie says

Hmm, this book was kind of like a banana- it needs the outsides to hold it together but the part worth consuming is in the middle. Pardon the bad simile but you get the idea, right? :-P

It took me 50 or so pages to get into the book, and then I was pretty intrigued, but the last 100 pages or so (the climax and wrap-up) weren't as sharp and punchy as I'd hoped for.

In a few years when I think of this book I'll probably remember glassy people, clones, and a cranky jesus.

Memorability Factor 7/10

Silver Thistle {adores JAFF & TEOTWAWKI. Oh, and acronyms :P} says

I think I read a different book to the one that was advertised on the back cover blurb. The book sounded really interesting and a bit different to most other 'end of the world' scenarios I've read but mostly it's just not that gripping once you get into it. It's a steady story which kept me turning pages - but only to try and get to the tale that was promised. I don't usually quote a synopsis in my reviews but I'm going to break with tradition here so that you know what the story *wasn't* about.

"An archaeological manhunt is raging in the holy land -- a hunt for the historical Jesus. Nathan Lee, the thief of bones, comes face-to-face with men made from the very relics he looted, one of whom claims to be Jesus Christ, but may also be Patient Zero."

Sounds like Jesus is an integral part of the story, no? Nope. Blink and you'll miss it and even if you catch it it's not what you're expecting/hoping for.

The synopsis sounded good to me and the first few chapters were really promising but very quickly I lost interest in the main character, which isn't really what you're looking for in a book.

My indifference to Nathan Lee (for some reason even his name gets on my nerves) meant that I never really

got involved with his struggles and/or experiences.

There are also a few characters we meet and I'm still not sure why or how they figure in the story. They're given fairly large chunks of storyline but if they were removed I can't say that it would take much away from the tale.

It's not the worst book I've ever read, but I'm a bit disappointed that the fabulous story I was looking forward to wasn't forthcoming. I think that if I wasn't misled into looking for a story that wasn't there, then I might have got involved more. But, before I knew it I was at the end and left wondering if I'd missed a chapter or 3. The conclusion when it comes seems so rushed that I had to go back and re-read the last few chapters because I was sure I'd missed a crucial pivotal moment. I hadn't....and there wasn't...

It's a bit of a mish-mash of ideas going on actually and not all of it gels when thrown together into a single story. The worst part is the the virus itself, which the book revolves around....it's just madness. Utter tripe!

For fans of apocalyptic plague fiction, give it a whirl....just don't expect what's written on the back cover.

It's not a book I'd go back to, but since it belongs to a genre that I'm very fond of, I'm glad I read it.

Marvin says

A science fiction piece reminiscent of Michael Crichton, though less intense as a thriller, but with the same kind of smart, heroic but flawed characters who confront the destructive power of science. It's billed as a story about the conflict between science & faith, & the incident that initiates the devastating plague at the center of the story is a byproduct of a search for the historical (physical) Jesus, but that's pretty incidental; the heart of the story is less about a conflict between science & faith than about a struggle to maintain the human soul at the heart of scientific research rather than allowing the scientific goal, however crucial, to justify any means to attain it. It took almost half the book to set up the story, but it was engaging & provocative.

Scott says

OK, I finished it. Rather a slog - not worth the bother, really. Not a *bad* book, just not any good. Not suspensful enough to warrant the disorganized plotlines, shifting focus, complete unbelievability, shallow charactizations, etc.

Why are biothrillers so reliant on stereotypes? The female scientists are always beautiful, the males amazing athletes. You can tell who one of the villains will be immediately, because he's obese and gay (at least he's not mincing). The other one, of course, is in a wheelchair. Little other diversity is described (I think one family is African, and there is a Neanderthal who gets sympathetic treatment....)

Jessica Keeling says

Though I had a hard time getting through the first few chapters to the meat of the story, this book definitely ranks as one of my favorite apocalypse stories. It has some religious undertones and a lot of genetic

experimentation combined with a heartfelt story of love, loss and redemption.

Brian Steele says

Okay, don't go by the nonsense on the front or back cover. Some idiot at the Publishing House tossed that on to sell more books. This *is* a decent enough novel, although boring in a few spots, but terribly misleading based upon first glance. Fortunately, I had already read "*The Descent*" (excellent!) and "*Deeper*" (meh) by Jeff Long, so I gave it a shot.

Forget the whole "cloned Jesus" garbage. This is an apocalyptic thriller about a plague that drives people crazy, then blissful, before finally killing them. And by *them*, I mean pretty much everyone. Think of Stephen King's "*The Stand*" told from a more scientific standpoint.

Brent Morrison says

This is one of those books that truly make a person think. The whole concept was quite original. The story bogs down here and there, but all in all I thought it was great to juxtapose the arrogant smugness of modern day scientists against the world views of a bunch of revived first century men who had died in one of history's truly horrible human inventions, crucifixion.

P.J. Kelley says

Although this book abounds in the usual Leftists tropes (weak minded, card carrying NRA member falls for fraudulent messiah during a plague brought on by some weirdo Christofascist who likes to inhale blood reliquaries of ancient saints), the book itself rises above its self-imposed PC mire and delivers an extremely well constructed example of a classic horror adventure apocalypse novel.

I decided if Miranda did not resurrect Nathan Lee, or if Long did not betray his readers by tacking on some other kind of supposedly happy ending, I would get on Goodreads and 5 star this thing.

Also, this a page turner. I just read in nonstop, basically, with a pause for a few hours sleep. Unless there is a wide genre of such books I am unfamiliar with, this is an exceptionally creative and erudite novel. Long knows a lot about a lot of different topics, and this makes this book rewarding on several levels.

The profound takeaway here is that Biblical prophecy is self fulfilling. The Rapture occurred, but was an artificial event, induced by one of Christ's more misguided followers. Anyway, here's hoping Long is a not a messenger for the darker members of the New World Order, because this is some serious Georgia Guidestones fulfillment here as well, layed out in a fairly plausible manner.
