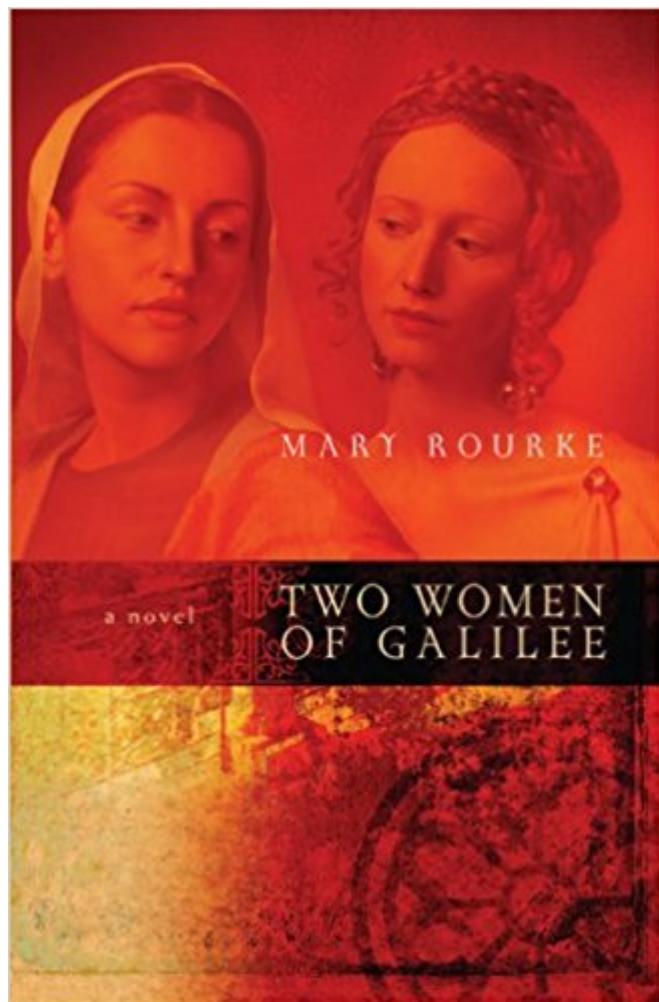


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# Two Women Of Galilee



## **Synopsis**

Wife to Chuza, King Herod's chief steward, Joanna lives a life of luxury in the city of Sepphoris. Yet not even the finest doctors can restore health to her lungs, which have ailed her since childhood. But Joanna has heard talk of a local healer, and the rumours intrigue her - she has only seen this Jesus of Nazareth from a distance.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Mary, Jesus's mother, and Joanna, the wife of a steward of Herod Antipas, Galilee's ruler, are the heroines of Rourke's first novel, a gentle tale with a respectable mix of suspense, murder and romance. As Joanna searches for a cure for her failing health, she hears of a miracle worker, Jesus, and decides to ask his mother to arrange a meeting. Joanna's encounter with Jesus results in her physical healing, a bright new faith and a growing closeness to Mary. Unfortunately, her alliance with the Miracle Man creates political problems for her husband, Chuza. When it becomes clear that someone is poisoning Chuza, one suspect is Joanna, whose new circumstances take her through many of the recorded events of Christ's life, including His death, burial and resurrection. Romance blooms as Nicodemus, a secret follower of Jesus, shows more than a passing interest in the widowed Mary. The conclusion puts a new spark into Joanna's life and is sure to put a smile on the face of readers fond of cozy historicals. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

\*Starred Review\* Joanna, a Jewish woman who abandoned her roots for a luxurious life as the wife of Chuza, chief steward to Herod, finds her happiness compromised by her deteriorating lung condition. Having heard of the mysterious healer, Jesus, she contacts her cousin, Mary, the healer's mother, and miracle of miracles, she is healed. With health also comes a renewed sense of her heritage, and she becomes a follower of the great teacher. But as Jesus moves toward his fate, Joanna is caught between the Roman world, where her loyalties are in question, and Jesus, whose fate is in the hands of the Romans and, in some sense, Chuza. Rourke tells the Crucifixion story, but her perspective on it, derived from human relationships rather than politics or doctrine, is fresh and affecting. John MortCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

Mary Rourke has contributed to an important area of biblical studies by her speculation as to the relationship between Jesus' mother, Mary, and a steward to the court of Harod Antipas. This biblical area was heretofore a vacuum, and it seems entirely appropriate to hypothesize a situation that will surely bring not only much discussion, but likely formal theological theories. An underlying issue involves the interrelation between the Hebrew/Aramaic "traditional" Torah followers and the Greek/Roman Hellenistic Jews of Jesus' time. Clearly, Joanna, the steward's wife, is of the latter ilk, but biblical theologians debate over which camp Mary and Jesus belonged to. Put another way, the interaction between these two groups is largely unknown and open to speculation. Rourke, though, does not address the messy problem of this categorization, but neither does the New Testament, which, for example, ignores the obvious language problem (except for Acts 6) and has lots of dialog between Greek and Aramaic speaking people. That is, Rourke circumvents the problem by treating these Jewish people as monolithic in order to get the story across. The story is based on 17 verses in the NT, each expanded into a chapter, and each potentially historically accurate. Jesus, here is a wonder-worker and teacher, not yet said to be the Messiah, the Son of God, or the Logos, all of which would come elsewhere. As a result, it is hard to find anything in the story offensive to Protestant, Catholic, Muslim or Jew. Herod Antipas, however, remains an especially bad guy.

It was a very good book. it was interesting to go back in time and see the Roman culture of the times in contrast to that of Hebrews and to watch a roman citizen come to know Mary, mother of the Jesus and the story of their friendship.

A thoroughly enjoyable read if you like Christian biblical fiction. Ms Rourke hints at a romantic attachment to Jesus that is not reciprocated - a Gnostic Gospel concept. However, she makes a

realistic case for the importance of Mary Magdalene as an important female follower of Jesus.

I love this book, and have given it to several friends. It is written from the perspective of two women (Mary is one) in their time period, showing many of the customs and interconnected relationships of the era. I would highly recommend this book, well written, an easy read.

Thoroughly enjoyed reading this book. I would recommend this book it gave me a different view from the bible. Did not want to stop reading.

This novel, is a joy to be sure and one I will gladly read again. To take one verse that mentions someone in the company of Jesus, grows into a tale of the redemptive power of love and forgiveness.

During our busy "boomer" generation, biblical scholarship has increased by quantum leaps, thanks to major discoveries like the Dead Sea Scrolls and scientific breakthroughs like carbon dating and DNA analysis. And while we may not know much more than we ever did about the inner lives of a vast sea of human beings who collectively built this great scriptural narrative of Judaeo-Christian faith, there is much more raw data around today for scholars to argue over and the rest of us to imagine with. Mary Rourke, former fashion-writer turned theology student (earning a second-career Divinity degree from Yale, no less!), was inspired by the kind of biblical details scholars barely have time for in our present information-clogged age. She did what most of us do when tiny details pique our curiosity --- she asked herself questions, and she imagined like crazy. But she also went a big step further and gave those imaginative musings feet. The result is her engaging and poignant first novel, *TWO WOMEN OF GALILEE*, a wholly fictional but knowledge-based account of the all-but-accidental relationship between the widowed Mary, mother of Jesus, and her distant cousin Joanna --- Mary, well known at the beginning and end of Jesus' life but hardly considered in between, and Joanna, whose branch of the family had "gone over" to the Romans and become well off in middle management circles at mad Herod's court. An unlikely pairing, if you go only by the "givens" of the Gospel accounts. At first glance, the novelist's pickings might seem as sparse as a field harvested right to the corners --- a practice frowned on by Hebrew tradition, as it left too little for widows and orphans to glean for survival. But Rourke daringly took up her concentrated theological education and stirred into it a contemporary woman's questions and passions, with a result that is sometimes tentative and a little awkward, but for the far greater part movingly thoughtful and

perceptive. She does not try to give Mary or Joanna any form of imposed Middle Eastern or historical "accent," either in thought or word, but cuts right to the meat of a story about a typical (though undocumented) encounter between Jesus and one of the untold numbers healed by his touch. For Joanna, her miraculous healing is no happily-ever-after tale, but is instead the starting point of a challenging spiritual and emotional pilgrimage that draws her from the pampered life of a Roman colonial socialite into the uncertain but fulfilling role of female disciple. It's no surprise that a story involving the mother of Jesus and her female companions should end up at the foot of the cross, but Rourke's engaging glimpse into shadowy places barely mentioned by the Bible's male recorders makes for a credible and honestly fresh look at this pivotal period in early Christian history. TWO WOMEN OF GALILEE has been beautifully timed to accompany both seekers and those of long-held faith through the just-begun journey of Lent. --- Reviewed by Pauline Finch (paulinefinch@rogers.com)

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