



# The Jerusalem Syndrome: My Life as a Reluctant Messiah

*Marc Maron*

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By the author of *Attempting Normal* and host of the podcast *WTF with Marc Maron*, *The Jerusalem Syndrome* is The Gospel according to Maron: a spiritual memoir of your average hyperintelligent, ultraneurotic, superhip Jewish standup comedian and seeker.

The Jerusalem Syndrome is a genuine psychological phenomenon that often strikes visitors to the Holy Land—the delusion that they are suddenly direct vessels for the voice of God. Marc Maron seems to have a distinctly American version of the Jerusalem Syndrome, which has led him on a lifelong quest for religious significance and revelation in the most unlikely of places.

Maron riffs on Beat phenomena with its sacred texts, established rituals, and prescribed pilgrimages. He spends some time exploring the dark side of things, as his obsessions with cocaine (known to Maron as “magic powder”), conspiracy theories, and famous self-destructive comedians convince him that the gates of hell open beneath Los Angeles. As his quest matures, he reveals the religious aspects of Corporate America, pontificating on the timeless beauty of the Coca-Cola logo and even taking a trip to the Philip Morris cigarette factory, where the workers puff their own products with a zealot-like fervor. The culmination of Maron’s Jerusalem Syndrome comes during his own tour of the Holy Land, where, with Sony camcorder glued to his eye socket, he comes face-to-face with his own ambiguous relationship to Judaism and reaches the brink of spiritual revelation—or is it nervous breakdown?

Marc Maron has considerably adapted and expanded his praised one-man show to craft a genuine literary memoir. Whether he’s a genuine prophet or a neurotic mess, he’ll make you laugh as you question the meaning of life.

“Marc Maron is blazingly smart, rapid-fire, and very funny . . . A brilliant and relentless screed.” –David Rakoff, author of *Fraud*

“Marc Maron is the first crazy person I’ve ever envied. In his brainiac-memoir-meets-hilarious-travelogue, he demonstrates the ability to tell a story with an extraordinary provocative intelligence that is regrettably shared by few.” – Janeane Garofolo, comedian

## The Jerusalem Syndrome: My Life as a Reluctant Messiah Details

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Author : Marc Maron

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## From Reader Review The Jerusalem Syndrome: My Life as a Reluctant Messiah for online ebook

### Peter Knox says

Listened to the audiobook. I'm a Maron fan but this book was of a weaker structure than *Attempting Normal*. Approach as bonus content/backstory to that.

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### Mark says

Fantastic book about comedian Marc Maron's journey of self discovery where he finds that he's not nearly as important as he once thought he was. I've been a fan of Maron's through his hosting gig at *Short Attention Span Theater* and his run on *Air America* and now his *WTF* podcast. The thing that keeps me coming back is his relentless honesty and ability to be candid about almost everything in his life, and finding humor in unlikely places, usually within his existential angst and personal trauma. In *The Jerusalem Syndrome* Maron charts his early life and career, describing his long bout with the titular syndrome, which is a psychosis characterised by an intense religious character with delusions of self importance and the belief that one is a major religious figure or might bring about the messiah, triggered by a visit to the city of Jerusalem, except in Maron's case, he had it long before visiting the city. He describes the ups and downs of his career, his drug addiction, flirtation with conspiracy theories to explain what was wrong with the world, his gradual realization that his career and personal problems have more to do with his failings than others', and ultimate revelation in Israel that he's not the chosen one. Maron is a good writer with an easy to read, witty, and very sardonic style. Worth a read.

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### Megan says

I impulse-downloaded this book to my Kindle while at the gym because I finished what I was reading, and had also recently finished working my way back through all the old *WTF* podcasts. Though some of the stories were familiar from the podcast, this book was surprisingly touching in addition to being funny. Devoured it in about 2 days and loved every second of it. Love Maron's honest comedic voice.

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### Heather says

Augmented my read of *Attempting Normal* with the audio version of this one. Maron's 2001 memoir, shaped around a God complex/religious theme. Being a huge *WTF* fan and having just read *Attempting Normal*, the difference to me between Maron now and Maron then is quite striking. The *WTF* era Maron is much softer and I have to say IMO much funnier. This one has an edge, a pressure to it that seems to actually make the jokes not land anywhere near as well, obscures them even. Plus, the religious theme seems a little foisted upon it, either that or it just makes him seem that much more of a pain in the ass/self-centered/narcissistic.

What's weirdest to me about it is that this audio version is new, so that edge and anger and whatever are, at least to him, really tied into the content and not just a factor of who is reading it. HE is reading it, and he read

it recently. So either he is still reading it with the attitude that it was written with years ago (and leftover from the stage show about it), whereas it could actually be delivered more softly now and thus be a little more self-deprecating/palatable, or else that's just mixed into it enough that you can't separate the two. Either way, this book makes it clear how much work Maron has done on himself in the intervening decade and he's a much softer, more approachable version of himself now. Good on him.

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### **Kelley Tackett says**

"Faith in the face of disappointment is only enhanced by laughter in the face of pain."

"I still believe there are no coincidences, but I no longer think I am the chosen one. I think the path of my life has been to follow a trail of crumbs being dropped unintentionally by a God eating a piece of cake as he walks quickly away from a dinner I wasn't invited to on his way to deal with the end of the world."

"There is a realization one makes as one gets older. When you're young you really think you are angry for reasons and causes. As you get older, you realize you might just be angry. It was part of my voice. I still craved a purpose. A grand purpose. I felt that God had put me on hold."

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### **Denny says**

I could write a long screed about all the aspects of *The Jerusalem Syndrome* that I didn't like but won't bother to spend any more time on it than I already have listening to it. I did not enjoy Maron's narration at all, and I quit counting how many times I almost gave up on it during chapters 6, 7, & 8, in which he explains, at great length, his years of almost unbelievable substance abuse. If Goodreads allowed it, I'd rate it 1.5 stars because there were 4 or 5 anecdotes near the beginning and end of the book that caused me to chuckle. This one's really not my cup of tea.

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### **Paul Mirek says**

Having watched parts of his IFC show, listened to his twice-weekly podcast, and even seen Mr. Maron perform at Durham's Carolina Theatre earlier this year, I figured I had a good idea of what to expect from his first book.

Turns out I was both right and wrong. Fans of Maron's later work will recognize his grappling with weighty issues of belief and morality as well as his fascination with the ephemera of show business. The debauched details of Maron's early career are a less frequent topic of discussion these days, though—and after seeing the brutal honesty with which he addresses them here, it's easy to see why he doesn't feel the need to add anything further.

On his podcast, Maron focuses on the seemingly insignificant decisions and choices that brought his guests to where they are today. He turns his erudite gaze on himself here, describing how his twin feelings of inadequacy and mania propel him from the heady days of undergrad hedonism to the dark inner circles of comedian Sam Kinison's coterie and on into the world of paranoid political conspiracies—a Virgilian journey that threatens to overwhelm him at every turn.

At times, the book has the ominous feel of a horror story, even knowing the ending. Of course, those are often the parts where I laughed the loudest. The narrative starts to flag near the end as Maron attempts to wrap things up a little too tidily, but the bulk of the book stands up with some of his best work.

## Jackie says

I am a big fan of Marc Maron's podcast, "WTF With Marc Maron." He is an intelligent, insightful interviewer, who can talk to comics, musicians, actors, directors with equal ease. He is also an anxiety-ridden, middle-aged Jewish comic, who does not hesitate to discuss his fears--however ridiculous--in front of an audience. I wasn't sure what to expect from this book, although I'm pretty sure I expected it to be funnier than it was. That doesn't mean I didn't enjoy it; it just was something other than what I had assumed. It's a memoir that basically helped me to piece together the bits of his life to which he often refers in his podcast, in a more-or-less chronological fashion.

It was especially interesting to hear Maron read the book himself. I'm actually not certain he was the best choice. His style is somewhat frenetic, and I'm not convinced that's the best way to read this. Then again, he probably wrote it in the same frenetic fashion, so his reading is probably the truest representation of his intention.

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## Suzie says

Maron's memoir. Similar to the portions of Maron's podcast where he talks about his life. His experience of life is more extreme than mine. Scattered throughout there are details that light up important moments of his life that are things that I will never experience. There are little relatable moments, like how he gets so excited by shopping for sneakers that he tells the people at the store that they should come with a cape. Since I like Maron, this gave me a solid grasp on where he's coming from. I don't know that someone who didn't already like him would be interested in reading this. This isn't Angela's Ashes (which is my gold standard for memoirs.) And it isn't supposed to be. But it is better than a lot of the memoirs that I read about other people that I already like.

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## Otto Lehto says

How do Maron's two books compare? Having read this book after the later, lengthier and slightly better semi-sequel, "Attempting Normal", the similarities are obvious. Most importantly, the humour and wit is there, already, in "J.S.". The best parts are autobiographical, and fans of Sam Kinison (and detractors alike) should rejoice at the delightful anecdotes hurled at that sadistic man.

I would say the quality of the writing is on par across the two books. The quality of the insights, and spiritual wisdom, is somewhat lower in "J.S.", perhaps because it is written by a younger man. And perhaps the context of recounting autobiographical youthful follies, with an extensive itinerary of the Holy Land, is just not quite as engaging as the post-marriage, post-breakup, post-podcast Maron of the later years. However, I would recommend the book despite its brevity and shortcomings; just don't expect more than a pretty good act by an angry Jewish comedian still building up his voice.

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## Colleen says

So, I also have Audible. I just love getting memoirs and listening to authors tell their story in their own words. I pre-ordered Jerusalem Syndrome as soon as it was offered and waited patiently through the month long push-back release. I had to listen to it as soon as it came out and thought I would be done in a day. THIS BOOK IS INTENSE. You must listen in small bursts because it Maron tells his story with the intensity of a buzz saw.

I started to listen to Marc Maron back during his Air America- Morning Sedition days. I have listened to all of his stand up shows and most of his podcasts, both WTF and when he does other shows like Nerdist. I thought I knew all his stories so I was pleasantly surprised when 95% of the material is new and CRAZY! Wow, that guy has lived a life- most of it in his own head. It was exhausting, but in a good way. I wish I could give it 4.5 stars because it was really good and I don't want to spoil it for you. Give it a listen because it was a very good time.

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## Anne says

I feel that this was probably a great show but the jokes were lost in translation. There were a few good lines:

"Faux Bohemians dressed in vintage clothes. If they couldn't find integrity in their own time, maybe they could find it in the pants of another time."

"The thing about conspiracy literature is that it's perfect for stupid people who want to seem smart and ground their hatred in something completely mystical and confusing..."

He also has some thought provoking ideas:

"All I know is that when I'm in a spiritual crisis, I'll do anything—smoke, eat, drink, watch TV, get online, buy something, listen to music, go to the movies, take a drive—anything but get down on my knees and say, "God, it's Marc. I don't know who I am anymore. Can you help me?"

"As I stood at the Wall I realized that I was part of an ancient, mystical, and spiritual community. I have my own beliefs, but at the wall I felt that I was part of an eternal legacy. It was something other than the Internet, which might ultimately win out, as it slowly usurps the collective unconscious."

"I think the path of my life has been to follow a trail of crumbs being dropped unintentionally by a God eating a piece of cake as he walks quickly away from a dinner I wasn't invited to on his way to deal with the end of the world."

"I had a moment when I understood the power of the religious community. I imagined what it would feel like to try to obey the laws of God. To age, move through and share all the processes of life with a circle of people with common beliefs. To rally together and persevere in the face of adversity and evil. To help and hurt each other in the name of love. To be there for each other's successes, failures, joys, and tragedies, then to try to fill your heart with the good moments and elevate them to a true, deep feeling of worthiness as a human being. To know you've done the best you can in the eyes of your peers and in the eyes of God. Most important, to try to fight against that moment of horrible truth when you look around and realize how utterly unfair it all is, as the injustice of time and disease slowly levels everyone. That's where the idea of God really comes into play. It eases the move toward the ground. Believing in the grand plan can take the edge off if you let it, because it really doesn't end well for anyone. Acceptance."

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### **Mitch Romig says**

I think I would have enjoyed this more if I'd read it before listening to 150+ episodes of Maron's podcast, where he has retold large portions of this book.

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### **Natalie says**

I saw Marc Maron's stand up performance at a small comedy club in Ybor City about five or six years ago. Ever since then, I keep expecting him to become hugely famous overnight; he was utterly hysterical. It's never happened, and in the meantime, we have Dane Cook.

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### **Lorena says**

I laughed all day listening to this book, and that's a gift. The last chapter was a bit sentimental, but the rest was pretty relentless belly laughs. And who doesn't need those? Highly recommended!

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