

R. Steven Notley, a pupil and colleague of David Flusser, updated his study of Jesus. The Sage from Galilee presents a new, well-researched biography of Jesus that places him in the context Jewish life and religion. It uses old written sources and new archaeological findings to this end.

The Sage from Galilee has a foreword, by Notley. It comprises 11 chapters, and an epilogue. The first chapter, 'Sources,' puts out Flusser's Jesus biographical portrait. He offers two contentious points about Jesus' history. First, Flusser proposes (without much explanation) that the Synoptic Gospels are based on earlier Hebrew manuscripts that were translated into Greek and redacted (p. 3). Flusser uses Hebrew to discuss Jesus' sayings throughout the book. Flusser thinks that Luke's Gospel is the source for Mark and Matthew (where Matthew departs from Mark, according to Flusser, he is preserving the earlier source that lies behind Luke). Thus, Luke's material is prioritized (along with Matthew's parallels). Mark's Gospel, like John's, is utilized when its authenticity can be shown. This section doesn't explain why or how Flusser reached his conclusions.

Flusser uses Luke and Matthew and Josephus to depict Jesus' religious and sociological background. Flusser's use of sources makes it impossible to distinguish how he confirms some aspects and dismisses others. Luke and Matthew's genealogies are unhistorical and inaccurate since they link Jesus to David. Jesus' birth in Bethlehem was meant to connect him to Jewish messianic expectation. Flusser seems to accept as factual the tale of Jesus being abandoned in Jerusalem as a child (Lk. 2.22-24) and the virgin birth. Josephus' allusion to Jesus (Ant. 18.63-64) identifies him as a Jewish sage, which counters the traditional belief that Jesus was a peasant. After Jesus' death, his family became disciples of his movement (Lk. 8.21; Mt. 12.46-50; Mk 3.34-35).

The following chapters set Jesus' doctrine and mission in Second Temple Judaism. The author links Jesus with John the Baptist, who shared the Essenes' view of baptism. Jesus and John the Baptist had different messianic beliefs, which Flusser explains in Chapter 7, "Kingdom of Heaven." Both believed a new era had begun, but John (and the Essenes) believed this meant the end of humanity. Jesus called the period after the kingdom of heaven a transitional age before the last judgment (p. 85). As per Flusser, Jesus didn't invent the eschatological timeframe, but he taught it first (he posits that Jesus adapted it from contemporary rabbinic thought).

Flusser's work has flaws. The author believes the Gospels were translated from Hebrew, as noted above. Flusser's conclusions are problematic because he doesn't explain how he reached them. Flusser rarely explains why he considers some Gospels material historical and others not .for instance, Flusser is 'convinced' that the crucified Jesus appeared to hundreds of people, as recorded in 1 Cor. 15.3-8 (p. 144), but he doesn't explain how he became convinced. At other instances, it is convenient for flusser to abandon certain material, such as Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, because its creators have an objective. Why this is regarded unhistorical whereas other narratives are historical, including the virgin birth (which may have an agenda), is rarely discussed.

Overall, despite these flaws, *The Sage from Galilee* presents a novel view of the real Jesus that will enrich subsequent studies on the subject. . Regardless of where they stand on the theological spectrum, many readers will become dissatisfied with Flusser's lack of methodology and standards for veracity. Flusser lays out the relevant background for how Jesus is presented in the Gospels by using a wide library of ancient and Jewish sources. This Jesus is both an innovator and a product of his Jewish environment.