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Book Review

David Flusser, The Sage from Galilee

David Flusser, a Jewish scholar who was born in Vienna in 1917 and subsequently emigrated to Israel, is the author of the book "The Sage of Galilee: Rediscovering the Genius of Jesus." Flusser spent many years teaching at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The book was initially released in Hebrew in 1998. In 2007, Eerdmans published an English translation of the work. In the book, Flusser presents a fresh viewpoint on Jesus of Nazareth, who he considers to be a Jewish sage rather than a Christian Messiah. According to Flusser, Jesus' teachings were based on Jewish philosophy and were primarily directed at Jews. The political and theological atmosphere of Roman-occupied Palestine, the impact of Hellenistic philosophy and religion, and the numerous Jewish sects and movements that were active at the time are all topics that Flusser also examines in his study of the cultural and historical backdrop of Jesus' life. One of Flusser's central claims is that Jesus was an expert in the use of paradox, challenging his hearers and inciting deeper thought on his presumptions and beliefs through contradictory remarks and deeds. Jesus' teachings, according to Flusser, were distinguished by a strong ethical component that placed a premium on virtues like love, compassion, and social justice. Overall, "The Wise Man of Galilee" paints an insightful and nuanced image of Jesus

that will interest both academic readers and general readers. In the preface, Flusser outlines his main argument that Jesus is to be understood as a Jewish sage rather than a Christian Messiah. He argues to you that Jesus' teachings were rooted in Jewish thought and were primarily intended for a Jewish audience. Flusser also argues that understanding Jesus as a sage provides a more accurate and nuanced view of his teachings and his relevance to contemporary society.

Chapter 3: The Sage and His Disciples

The main argument of this chapter is that Jesus was not just a teacher, but also a mentor who trained his disciples in a specific way of life and thought. Flusser argues that Jesus' disciples were not just passive learners, but active participants in his movement, and that Jesus sought to impart a deeper understanding of God's kingdom to them through his teachings and actions. Flusser uses a variety of evidence to support his argument, including passages from the Gospels that describe Jesus' interactions with his disciples, as well as insights from Jewish sources about the role of discipleship in ancient Jewish culture. For example, he cites the saying "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19) as evidence of Jesus' active recruitment of disciples, and he also discusses the Jewish concept of talmidim, or disciples, and how it relates to Jesus' teaching style. Overall, I find Flusser's argument in this chapter to be convincing. His use of both Gospel passages and Jewish sources provides a well-rounded view of Jesus' role as a mentor to his disciples, and I appreciate his emphasis on the active participation of the disciples in Jesus' movement.

Chapter 6: Jesus' Teachings on Ethics

The main argument of this chapter is that Jesus' teachings on ethics were not just a set of rules to follow but were rooted in a deeper understanding of God's kingdom and the nature of human existence. Flusser argues that Jesus' teachings on topics such as forgiveness, nonviolence, and love for one's enemies were not just moral imperatives but were part of a broader vision for how humans can live in harmony with God and with one another. Flusser uses a range of evidence to support his argument, including passages from the Gospels that record Jesus' teachings on ethics, as well as insights from Jewish ethical traditions and philosophy. For example, he cites Jesus' instruction to "love your enemies" (Matthew 5:44) as evidence of his radical approach to ethics, and he also discusses the Jewish concept of *tikkun olam*, or repairing the world, as a framework for understanding Jesus' teachings on social justice. I find Flusser's argument in this chapter to be compelling. His use of both Gospel passages and Jewish sources provides a nuanced view of Jesus' teachings on ethics, and I appreciate his emphasis on the deeper spiritual significance of these teachings.

Chapter 8: Jesus and the Pharisees

The main argument of this chapter is that Jesus' relationship with the Pharisees was complex and multifaceted and cannot be reduced to a simple conflict between Jesus and the religious establishment. Flusser argues that Jesus' teachings on ethical and theological matters were often like those of the Pharisees, and that he had a degree of respect for them as religious leaders. However, he also contends that there were significant

differences between Jesus' teachings and the teachings of the Pharisees, particularly on the topics of ritual purity and Sabbath observance. Flusser uses a range of evidence to support his argument, including passages from the Gospels that describe Jesus' interactions with the Pharisees, as well as insights from Jewish sources about the beliefs and practices of the Pharisees. I found the overall argument of "The Sage from Galilee: Rediscovering Jesus' Genius" to be persuasive based on the points made in the three chapters that were randomly chosen, as well as my general comprehension of the book's major thesis. Instead of portraying Jesus as solely a religious figure, Flusser aims to show him as a wise man and philosopher who incorporated Jewish customs and teachings into his own philosophy. He stresses the significance of comprehending Jesus' teachings within the framework of Jewish history and culture and contends that they were grounded in a deeper knowledge of God's kingdom and the nature of human life. I like how Flusser emphasizes how Jesus' followers actively participated in his movement and how he uses both Jewish and Gospel references to support his claims. In general, I consider the book to be a helpful resource for anybody looking to examine Jesus' life and teachings from a Jewish viewpoint. Flusser's argument is well founded and offers a valuable contribution to the study of the life and teachings of Jesus.