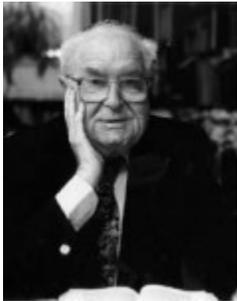


## Book Review

**D. Flusser**, with contributions from **R.S. Notley**, and an introduction by **J.H. Charlesworth**. *The Sage from Galilee: Rediscovering Jesus' Genius*. (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) 2007. Pp. 191 + chronological table (330 B.C. – A.D. 70) + 28 illustrations. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Price \$24.99. ISBN 978-0-8028-2587-2

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Here lies the work of one man, who has a passion for the life of another, the Son of Man, who had a passion for mankind. According to the brief bio included, in *The Sage from Galilee*, Dr. David Flusser was a professor of early Christianity and Second Temple Judaism at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, a member of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, and a recipient of the National Israel Prize in 1980 for his academic achievements. Dr. Flusser delved deep into the life of Jesus. Truly seeking the face of Jesus and how He lived on earth. Dr. Flusser discovered Jesus' ethnic background, His spoken language, His beliefs, and well-kept traditions, which were more of His lifestyle. And with this expanded fourth edition, Dr. Flusser includes many more arguments and challenges how we, Christians, read the Synoptic Gospels today and challenges other scholars' theories on the Life of Jesus.

Chapter One, *The Sources*, suggests the life of Jesus through the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Matthew, Mark, and Luke's Gospels are parallel to one another sharing the history of Jesus. The Book of John is considered the one written about the life of Jesus, and how one studies religion, faith, practice, and experience. Dr. Flusser believed to understand the historical Jesus one must search the Jewish doctrines and become familiar with Judaism in Jesus' time. The original texts of the Gospels were written in Hebrew and then translated into Greek. As it made its way around the world.

Chapter Two, *Ancestry*, takes us through the account of Jesus' genealogy. That included what His name meant, the family line He would be born through, and the family HE was born to. Jesus is life as a child, his teachings at twelve, and His education. A couple of photographs of Bethlehem, the Church of the Nativity, and Nazareth today were included. There is a narrative of the tension between Jesus and His family, His mother Mary, and His siblings. How they may have endured psychological turmoil as they learned of His personal decision for mankind. How did His mother cope after His crucifixion? I find this to be an imperative reflection of Jesus and His family during this time.

Chapter Three, *Baptism*, visits John the Baptist and the baptism of Jesus Christ. John the Baptist came and fulfilled the prophecy in Isaiah 40: 3, "The voice of one calling, In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord". John reiterated time in again he was not the way but for those to get ready and prepare themselves, for the Lord is coming. And for those to prepare one needed to repent of their sins and to be baptized. The "Baptism" attracted men to John because they hoped in and believed that the "immersion would expiate their sin, and they would escape

the wrath of God's judgment (p 19). But they had it all wrong and were thinking of their own selfish ways. John taught and gave a warning to the Jewish community. He boldly advised his people to repent of their sin, to lead a righteous life, to practice justice toward their fellows, and piety towards God, and then after to join in baptism.

### The baptism of Jesus Christ

Chapter Four, *Law*, brings us to Jesus, the Living Word, "born under the Law". Jesus' purpose was to fulfill the Law, as it was spoken of in the Old Testament. But the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes all had a concern with the Way He walked under the Law. It was unrecognizable! And then there were the Christian thinkers and scholars who knew the founder of their "religion" was Jewish, faithful to the law, followed his upbringing in Judaism, and never had to succumb to the European way of life!

Jesus called out the hypocrisies of all the religious groups. Their doctrines of law say one thing and their deeds practice something else. In Matthew 23:3, Jesus says, "for they preach, but do not practice". In Matthew 23:1-36, Jesus describes the *seven (7) woes* to show the Pharisees who they truly are. I learned that Jesus' mission was to only fulfill the Law, but to only teach and heal the Jewish people. And although Jesus found fault and hypocrisies among the Gentiles and called them out too, there are two instances where Jesus healed a non-Jew because of their faith. Jesus was even marveled by their words and their belief in Him. Jesus turned to his followers and said, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith".

Chapter Five, *Love*, delves into the act of Love & the Golden Rule. Do the two go together? The Golden Rule, "Love your neighbors as yourself". "Treat those how you want to be treated". "Show mercy and love toward all". Jesus saw these acts of Love, the Golden Rule, as a summary of the Law of Moses.

Surely, Jesus lived his life from the beginning of his ministry to his death on the cross, teaching on love. That real "agape" love. But the challenge to the Jewish community came when Jesus says, in Matthew 22:35-40, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind". Jesus' love is for our Father God, He loved God's people. But his mission was His Passion for the Love of His Father. Jesus' love is unconditional, and He has compassion.

Chapter Six, *Ethics*, takes the reader through a journey of Jesus and His ethics. The first thing Jesus was not to these scholars, and religious groups was impressed. The Essenes view, and Pharisaic views on how they moved and lived among common folks, was of no real substance in Jesus' mind. I believe their morals, and ethics were based around the status of their wealth, materials, land, their clothing, cattle, and then some. With their way of thinking, laws of the land were etched in stone. And the laws were dehumanizing. Jesus challenged their way of thinking and living. And made it known how they lived was shallow, self-righteous, held no real weight, and was not pleasing in the sight of God.

In the *Epilogue*, Dr. David Flusser, unfolds his work on the historical and beloved Life of Jesus Christ, through this summary. Dr. Flusser's love for the "Sage" from Galilee has been so eloquently and vividly written. The life of Jesus is profound, mysterious, powerful, and courageous. It is a life lived like no other and it never will be another life lived this way.

I truly understand the passion and the desire for the truth to be told and written by Dr. David Flusser. As a Christian who has learned much more about the life of Jesus Christ from this text, I want more. The most amazing things about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is He was born to mankind, was & is the Highest God, who lived with us, felt with us, grieved with us, and loved with us. But what was most amazing was His Passion. I highly recommend this reading and will continue to read more of Dr. Flusser's and Dr. Steven Notley's works on the Life of Jesus. I know I still have so much to learn and gain.