

In this interview, Roy Blizzard interviews David Flusser about the history of Jesus. Roy begins by asking him about the mental image that he has in his mind about Jesus. Flussers responds by saying “It is impossible to define Jesus’ personality and Jesus’ claims completely clearly because he is unique in the whole world. But one thing is clear: that he was both a Jewish teacher and a Jewish leader and that he is seen having a special contact between himself and God and that he thought that he will return as the savior.” He goes on to explain that we can hear his voice but we can hear it in a better way when we study the Gospels on the Jewish background. “It is not only important for the understanding of the words of Jesus and of his message and of the meaning of his person, but it is also important to study such Jewish sources which don’t directly explain a special saying of Jesus.” This is something that I agree with. It is always good to know the history and study the background of something if you want a deeper understanding of it. They continue to talk about the importance of studying other important subjects of Judaism such as the Torah to deepen their understanding towards the end of the interview.

Roy then goes on to ask Flusser, “what language did Jesus speak as a Jew in the first century?” According to Flusser, Jesus knew both languages of the land which are Aramaic and Hebrew. Aramaic was the language of everyday life in first-century Palestine, and it was the language spoken by Jesus' fellow Galileans. It is also the language in which many of the early Christian texts were written, such as parts of the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Mark. Hebrew was the language of religious instruction and study in the Jewish tradition, and it is likely that Jesus would have been fluent in it, as he was a Jewish teacher. Greek was the language of trade and commerce in the Eastern Mediterranean, and it is possible that Jesus had some familiarity with it, although it is unlikely that he was fully fluent. Flessur says that it is very improbable that Jesus spoke Greek.

Professor David Flusser believed that understanding the languages spoken by Jesus and the people of his time can help us better understand the context of his teachings and the culture in which he lived. For example, knowledge of Aramaic and Hebrew can shed light on the nuances of Jesus' teachings and the Jewish religious concepts he referred to, such as the use of parables and the interpretation of scripture. It can also help us understand the cultural and religious background of the early Christian community and the ways in which they developed and interpreted Jesus' message. He suggests that it is far more agreeable to translate Jesus' words in Aramaic of modern scholars, than to accept the simple fact that Jesus has spoken in Hebrew and that his teaching was in Hebrew.

As the interview continued, Roy asked if it would be possible to understand the words of Jesus as we have them recorded without the knowledge of Greek or Hebrew. Flusser gives multiple examples of phrases that were translated in either Hebrew or Greek to help him understand it better. One example was "the poor in Spirit". The background to the phrase exists as a self-designation of the Essenes. It means "the poor who have the gift of the Holy Spirit." To be "poor in spirit" is to acknowledge one's own limitations and shortcomings, and to turn to God for help and guidance. It is a recognition that we cannot rely solely on our own strength and wisdom, but must rely on God's grace and mercy. "You have to know that it was verbally translated, then when you know from the Dead Sea Scrolls what this poor in spirit in the Dead Sea Scrolls means, then you can find that the poor in spirit means not the proletariat, but it means those who are poor and have the Holy Spirit. This you can do only when you know the Hebrew background."

The most surprising thing I heard from Flusser's interview was him explaining why he understands why people think Jesus spoke Greek. He explains that he knew it was not easy for

Gentiles to accept the thorough Jewishness of Jesus. If they did, it would mean that they received a foreign God and not their own ancient pagan Gods. In this case they had to assimilate Jesus to the Greek Gods. This is something that was very intriguing to hear and learn about because in today's day and age, people often sway their beliefs to whatever corresponds with their values. I also liked towards the end of the interview how they were informing the viewers that in order to get the deepest understanding of Judaism, you must not only know the New Testament or Hebrew, you must know the whole Judaism of antiquity.