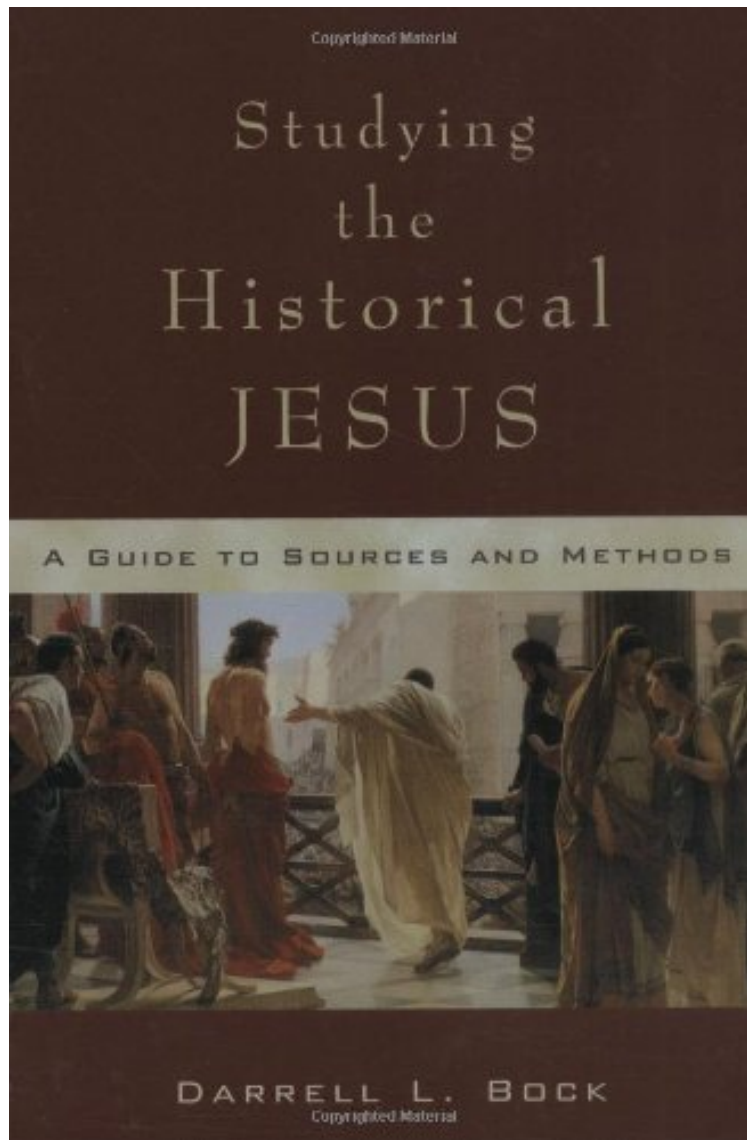


(Free pdf) Studying the Historical Jesus: A Guide to Sources and Methods

Studying the Historical Jesus: A Guide to Sources and Methods

Darrell L. Bock

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Darrell L. Bock : Studying the Historical Jesus: A Guide to Sources and Methods before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Studying the Historical Jesus: A Guide to Sources and Methods:

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. A defence on two fronts By Bahij Bawarshi In *Studying the

Historical Jesus* Darrell Bock has written a primer for his students at Dallas Theological Seminary, one that is also useful to interested readers in general. In a sense, the book provides a defense on two fronts of the historical study of Jesus: against the unfounded belief that it throws doubt on the truths of Scripture, and against excessive skepticism about the historicity of the Gospel accounts, such as many critics have engaged in since the Enlightenment. As he notes, "[W]e must differentiate between what we know from history and the text and the way we reconstruct history. ... rather than applying our doubt to the text, there is nothing wrong in examining carefully our own understanding in studying the text." (159) Thus, the book is in two parts: (1) A brief presentation of the sources of our knowledge and of "what we know from history and the text." The premise is our need to understand the social and cultural environment in which Jesus lived and in which the Gospels were written, and the historical background of the Jews prior to and including the time of Jesus that led to fervent messianic expectations. In the Introduction, under Greek Biblical Sources, Bock includes a survey of the content, themes and introductory issues pertaining to the four Gospels; in the conclusion to the whole book he expresses "confidence that the Gospels are a solid source of information." (2) An equally brief examination of the different critical methods, their strengths and weaknesses, that scholars use in reconstructing the history behind the Gospels and how the Gospels came to be in their present form. After an introductory section, there is a chapter on the three quests for the historical Jesus, in which Bock notes that the third quest does not supersede the second but runs alongside it - the third quest "works more seriously with Jewish backgrounds" (147). A chapter on historical criticism sets the stage for the following chapters on source, form, redaction, and tradition criticisms. The final chapter on narrative criticism and the Gospel genre is different in that the topics are subsumed under literary criticism and considerations, not historical criticism. The concise discussions drive the curious reader to reach out for more, aided by bibliographic footnotes; nonetheless, it is surprising how much information this introductory work imparts. Bock is an experienced writer; he adds interest to his prose by avoiding generalities (most of time), linking names and dates to hypotheses and methods, and relating seemingly ho-hum social, economic and geographic details to what we read in the Gospels. So, for example, not only do the hills of Galilee reach 2000 to 4000 feet above sea level while the Sea of Galilee is 685 feet below sea level, but also: "This dramatic drop-off explains the weather in some events in Jesus' ministry as he was on the Sea of Galilee. Winds can rush down with a tunnel effect... resulting in huge, dangerous storms" (113). Who after this would not want to read again the passage about Jesus and the disciples as they crossed the lake to "the other side" (Mark 4:35-41 parallels)? In the Preface, Dr. Bock says only time will tell whether he had succeeded in what he set out to accomplish in writing the book. Here is one affirmative vote. 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Wish I had this when I was starting out. By Jeri This is one very handy book. If you know very little about biblical scholarship, it fills in all the gaps and tells you about the scholarship of the last few centuries. It's also invaluable for anyone who simply needs to find some information quickly. For example, who was the first person to comment on the dating of Mark? "Irenaeus... places the composition after the death of Peter and Paul in the late 60s, while Clement of Alexandria looks to a date during Peter and Paul's time in Rome, which would push the date back into the 50s" (p 29). Or when was Luke first cited? In 1 Clement. What about the nonbiblical evidence? About the debated "Chrestus" mention, Bock points out that "The confusion may come from the name Chrestiani, a vulgar form of the name for Christians" (p 48). He goes through all the complications of trying to date the birth of Jesus. He includes all the problems of dating the census, even pointing out that "the term translated 'first' in Luke 2-2 could be rendered 'before' (as in John 15-18) in which case only one census is alluded to here, the later one from AD 6" (p 70). He also covers the history of the period, social background, and then, in the last half of the book, delves into the past few centuries of the hunt for the historical Jesus. What have two centuries found, have they managed to tease out the actual historical Jesus or not? He explains what has been called the three quests for the historical Jesus, and tells you who the main players were, and what has been the judgment about their theories. Whether you are starting out or an old hand at bible studies, this is a great book. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Straightforward (yet scholarly) reading on the real Jesus. By A Customer Darrell Bock does exactly what his book's subtitle promises: "A guide to sources and methods." In the first part, Bock systematically takes a look at the life of Jesus, considering the historical evidence beyond biblical sources; provides a basic chronology to the life of Jesus; and overviews the cultural background of Jesus. The second part provides methods for studying Jesus. This section is a must for students of Christ who have never heard of the different "criticisms" (i.e. source, form, redaction, tradition, etc.). It may sound so "negative," but really these issues need to be understood if one truly hopes to understand the person of Jesus Christ. I especially liked Bock's overview of source criticism and the different possibilities of which gospel came first. It was, I thought, very clear even though the issue is quite complicated. (...)

Interest in the historical Jesus continues to occupy much of today's discussion of the Bible. The vexing question is how the Jesus presented in the Gospels relates to the Jesus that actually walked this earth. Studying the Historical Jesus is an introductory guide to how one might go about answering that question by doing historical inquiry into the material found in the Gospels. Darrell Bock introduces the sources of our knowledge about Jesus, both biblical and extra-biblical. He then surveys the history and culture of the world of Jesus. The final chapters introduce some of the

methods used to study the Gospels, including historical, redaction, and narrative criticisms. Bock, a well respected author, provides an informed evangelical alternative to radical projects like the Jesus Seminar. His audience, however, is not limited only to evangelicals. This book, written for college and seminary courses, offers an informed scholarly approach that takes the Gospels seriously as a source of historical information.

About the Author Darrell L. Bock (Ph.D., University of Aberdeen) is Research Professor in New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. He is the author or editor of more than ten books, including the two-volume BECNT commentary on Luke.