

# Good example of the book critique of critical thinking

[History](#), [Middle East](#)



# **Jesus Is the Christ**

A paper

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In the book; Jesus is the Christ, Bird focuses on the personal differences of the writers of the gospels as the reason for the variations in the details and inconsistencies between them. Bird examines the weaknesses of the writers in producing information that suggests their areas of focus and intentions. This critique seeks to identify both Bird's faults and strengths as well as establish the accuracy of his comments, assertions and conclusions to ascertain the relevance of the book's content.

### **SUMMARY CRITIQUE**

This critique consists of disputations found in Jesus is the Christ. In studying the gospels, Bird made some remarks that are inconsistent and inaccurate to the actual accounts and events of the apostles who wrote the gospels. The differences that appear among the gospels indicate the fact that Bird had different experiences during actual events. Their memory and timing during

their writing created some variations. These variations, however, do not prove differences in Birds' motives and intentions in spreading the accounts of Jesus as the Christ to interested people who included both Jews and Gentiles.

The irony and mystery in Jesus' mission to the Jews is evident throughout his life to death. According to Bird, although a few followers believed Him as the long waited Messiah, others were disappointed when they realized they put their hope in a person incapable of redeeming them from slavery to Rome. According to the gospel of Mark, it was the Roman Centurion that admitted the extraordinary nature of Jesus after his death as the Son of God. It is ironical how the anticipating and anxious Jews failed to recognize His Identity to his death letting a ignorant foreigner to acknowledge the reality of the presence of the Son of God among them.

Before his death, Jesus comments on his departure confused his disciples. However, after his death and resurrection, they understood the entire story of triumph and redemption through crucifixion and death rather than redemption from political slavery. They then focused on a spiritual kingdom rather than, like the rest of the non-Christian Jews, on the freedom from Roman slavery. Most of the quotations the Gospels' writers accessed were from Jesus before he explained his entire mission. This is also the time when they anticipated the Messianic triumphant rise to glory and formation of the great Kingdom recognized world-wide as prophesied. They had not yet understood the Christ's mission as a spiritual King with a world-wide Kingdom. With their canal minds, the kept expecting Jesus rise to a political

royalty. However, they strove to keep the accounts of his activities as accurate as possible.

## **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW**

In *Jesus Is the Christ*, Bird purports that Matthew focuses on addressing the Jews rather than Gentiles. He asserts that the Apostle Matthew portrays Jesus as a Jew more than a universal figure. According to Bird, Matthew narrates the events in Jesus' life associating them with the Judaism tradition rather than on a logical and exemplary point of view. He goes on to insist that Matthew seeks to convince the Jewish Christians old on to teachings of the Torah. Bird portrays Matthew as Conservative and that he believes in the continuity of the Torah as a valid and relevant tool for the First Church. This notion is inaccurate considering the fact that the book was widely accepted and published by Gentile Christians due to the clarity in revealing the transition from the traditional Old Testament to the New Testament. As the author of *Jesus Is the Christ* acknowledges, the book widely available to early Gentile Christians as it was the favorite, most revealing book of the gospels. He goes on to note the fact that, Unlike Mark and Luke's books, the gospel according to Matthew was mostly quoted and used in building the early Christian foundation among Gentile Christians.

### **Matthew's sinister motives**

Bird insinuates that Matthew sought to accommodate Jews who vowed to maintain their Judaism culture and lived according to the Mosaic Law. With such a notion, there will be no need to believe in Jesus as the Christ while still holding on to the hard-core believes of the Torah. If true, then

Matthews's efforts would create a situation where Pharisees and Sadducees would accommodate Jesus as the Christ while still denying his existence. This situation is impossible considering the faith the Jews had on their religious leaders to maintain the Mosaic Law.

Bird's assertions would mean that Matthew denied the role of Jesus as the Christ and the reality of the need for conversion into Christianity by believing fully in Jesus. It would also mean that Isaiah's prophecy of a rude people that would deny their King failed. According to Isaiah the prophet, the Messiah came to his own but they did not receive him. Matthew's intention to show how Christianity was a continuity of Judaism with similarity in cultural practices rather than the true meaning of Jesus' teachings at the expense of the gospel is false.

This notion of Matthew's way of writing his book is Bird's main point of proving that he (Matthew) sought and succeeded in obtaining a larger audience. However, it is illogical to show that Matthew addressed Jewish Christians yet ended up attracting Gentile Christians. The Apostle Matthew for instance, does not mention the part where Jesus declared all foods clean. This is acceptable and understandable since both authors did not compare notes and therefore, may differ in a few details in their text. By linking the old Testament law and practices to the new faith, Matthew succeeded explaining and clarifying the origin and direction of the Gospel to Jews first and later to the Gentiles. According to Talmage and James in their book *Jesus the Christ: a study of the Messiah and His mission according to Holy Scriptures both ancient and modern*, He (Matthew) identifies Jesus first as a component in the Jewish history to prove He was expected.

## **Jesus as the Son of David**

In *Jesus Is the Christ* Bird uses Matthew's use of the phrase 'son of David' to insinuate that Matthew sold Jesus as a Jew for Jewish Christians to easily identify with him. However, it is unfair to assert that the early believers needed to be reminded or lured into believing in Jesus because He was a Jew or of the lineage of David. Other authors such as Mark may have missed using the phrase of various occasions not because they denied Jesus as the son of David or cared less about rebellious Jews.

Matthew's keen interest on Jesus as a descendant of David is not a bait to lure Jews into believing on him but proving to Jewish readers that indeed, Jesus fulfilled the early prophets' predictions.

Bird also notes that the lowly and poor in society acknowledged Jesus as the son of David according to Matthew. In contrast, the proud and rich leaders in Israel were proud and rude and rejected Jesus as the King. Bird's view is a shallow illogical fact. According to Kasper and Walter in their book *Jesus the Christ* (2011), the people who acknowledged Jesus as their promised King were humble people who believed Jesus by relating Him to the scriptures. The reason for their recognition was not because they were poor but because they experienced the fulfillment of scripture by the works of Jesus, son of Joseph, as the anointed Messiah.

It is inaccurate for Bird to claim that Matthew put words into the mouths of the lowly in society who were healed by Jesus. Matthew's story is based on firsthand experience on events. It would be likely that Matthew paid close attention to the public's comments more than other apostles who wrote the rest of the gospels. With keen ears, he was able to note the situations where

individuals mentioned the title 'son of David' either before or after they were attended to by Jesus.

Bird asserts that Matthew also used the phrase 'son of David' numerously to enhance the fact that the Jews rejected their own King and fulfilled their role as rebels to their Messiah. With this motive, Matthew is a selfish apostle who places guilt squarely on the Jews by providing proof of their misconduct in ignoring the evidence. Bird portrays Matthew with sinister intentions to condemn the rebellious Jews rather preach the gospel in its plainness.

In contrast to Bird's assertions that Matthew was inclined to the Jewish Christ-believers in a time of conflict between Jewish believers and the radical Jews who maintained their Judaism religion and culture, Talmage and James in *Jesus the Christ: a study of the Messiah and His mission according to Holy Scriptures* both ancient and modern claim that Matthews' book is a clarification of facts. By dwelling on Jesus as the son of David more than the other authors of the gospels and the entire New Testament, Matthew proved the fulfillment of Isaiah 40-55. According to Isaiah, the prophet, the Messiah had several roles to play other than being the King of Jews. Matthew keenly identifies these roles such as 'son of David', son of God, son of Man, a lowly and suffering servant, the charismatic rabbi and a new Moses (as prophesied by Moses the prophet). By enhancing the role of Jesus as the son of David, Matthew addresses the inaccurate rumors that denied the placement of Jesus in the lineage of David due to his life in Nazareth rather than Bethlehem. He easily identifies Jesus as a rightful leader in the appropriate lineage according to scripture.

## **LUKE'S GOSPEL**

In *Jesus Is the Christ*, Bird insists that Luke focused on defending the new religion by explaining in great details the doctrine to the both the Jews and the wider Roman public. In asserting that Luke is a sympathizer, Bird fails to notice that failing to address the inconsistent rumors about Christianity would hinder more people to convert to Christianity with full knowledge of their decision. The details of the events in both Luke and Acts clarify the mission of apostles and the accuracy of their gospel. These books are, therefore, neither accounts of sympathetic notions nor sentiments to defend the actions and activities of the apostles across the Roman Empire.

## **CONCLUSION**

In *Jesus Is the Christ*, Bird dwells on the differences in the accounts of Jesus events as written by different apostles to insinuate the writers' motives and intentions. However, the differences in the events portray the level of keenness of the various writers as well as their involvement and closeness to Jesus. Moreover, the variations in the details prove the different levels of understanding before Jesus' final departure. Every writer wrote most the similar accounts depending on their memories. They did not reveal the fact that they compared notes before finalizing on their records.

Bird portrays Matthew as Conservative and that he believes in the continuity of the Torah as a valid and relevant tool for the First Church. He portrays Luke as a sympathetic writer who strives to defend the doctrine and activities to the early Christians to the non-Christian Jews and Gentiles. In portraying Luke as a writer who goes into unnecessary detail to defend the



faith, Bird creates the impression that the books were addressed to the non-Christian community rather than the believing community.

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