



Bock, Darrell L. and Mitch Glaser, eds.

To the Jew First: The Case for Jewish Evangelism in Scripture and History

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Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

New Jersey

In September of 2003 a group of scholars met in New York City to present papers at a conference called: “To the Jew First in the New Millennium.” A second conference of the same name was held in Southern Florida later that year. This book is the collation of many of the essays presented at these two conferences. It boasts chapters from scholars such as Darrell L. Bock (who also co-edited this volume), Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., Arnold G. Fruchtenbaun, Craig A. Blaising, and more.

The book centers around the apostle Paul’s statement in Romans 1:16: “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also for the Greek.*” The main thesis is that the Jews are not to be forgotten in evangelism, and that Church needs to actively seek to present the Jewish community with the good news of Jesus Christ.

The chapters are divided into three sections: (1) Bible, (2) Theology, and (3) Mission; but these divisions are rather arbitrary. Each of the essays touches (even if only in part) on all three aspects. Many of the essays seek to prove (mainly through exegeting Romans 9-11) that the Church has not replaced Israel in the plan of God. Supersessionism in all its forms is repudiated in this volume, as well as Two-Covenant theology. The necessity of salvation through faith in Christ is presented throughout the essays, and all thought of the Jews being saved via Torah observance is rejected.

I was pleased with the interpretation of various texts, especially Darrell Bock's treatment of Acts 2, 3, and 13, as well as Walter Kaiser's exegesis of Romans 9-11. I also found most of the theology in the book agreeable, but in the end I was disappointed with the pragmatism (or lack thereof) of the book. While the essays do well to show what Jewish evangelism looked like in Scripture and throughout various periods of history, there isn't much of how to apply this in a modern context. One notable exception is Barry Leventhal's essay: "The Holocaust and the Sacred Romance" (122-154) in which he lists three barriers that Jews in a post-Holocaust setting have when being presented with the Gospel; i.e., the emotional barrier, the intellectual barrier, and the volitional or moral barrier (131-132). He turns to the Biblical prophets (e.g., Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea) in suggesting a way to respond once recognizing these barriers, but even here, I would have preferred something a bit more suited to the *modern* evangelist.

I would have loved to have seen an essay from Michael L. Brown, given the subject matter, but I can't fault the book on these grounds. I think the essays were all well-written, easy to understand, and more or less accurate in their assessments, but I wouldn't recommend this book to someone seeking some tips for ministering to their Jewish neighbors. For that task I would recommend Michael L. Brown's four (soon to be five) volume series on *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus*. I would recommend this book to people who are interested in a solid Biblical/theological presentation on how and why God has not replaced the Jewish people with the Church. For those who already have a solid grasp of this subject matter, your time and attention will best be spent elsewhere.