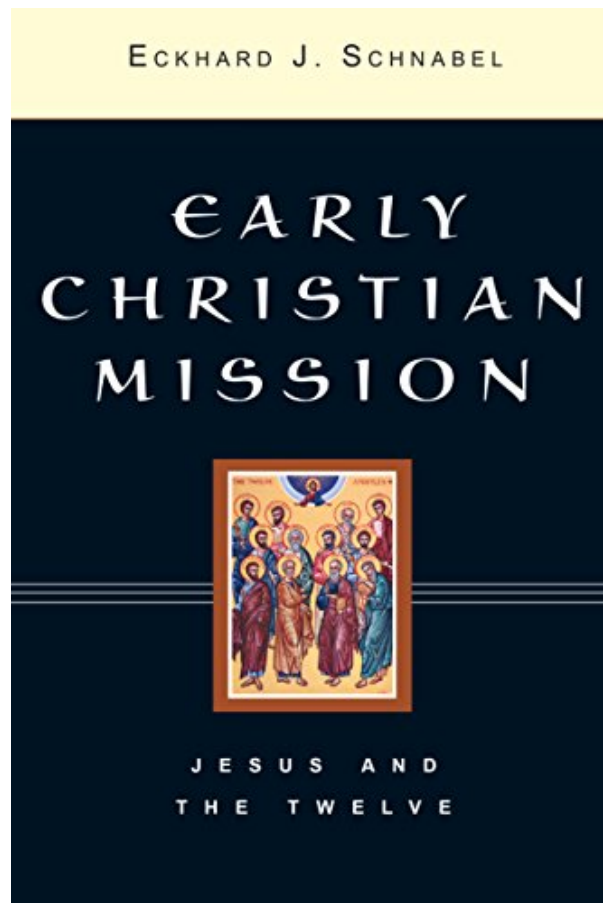


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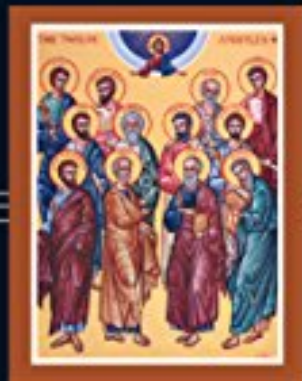


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How is it that a first-generation Jewish messianic movement undertook a mission to the pagan world and rapidly achieved a momentum that would have a lasting and significant impact on world history? This momentous question has surprisingly eluded the concentrated focus of historians and New Testament scholars. Perhaps it is because the story of early Christian mission encompasses so much of the history of early Christianity. And to tell that history is to traverse a broad spectrum of issues in contemporary New Testament studies, all of which have been investigated in specialized depth, though frequently unconnected to a unified picture. On the other hand, as Eckhard Schnabel comments, those who have attempted to paint "the portrait of early Christian missions" have "often painted with brush strokes too broad." As a result, an "undifferentiated picture of early Christian mission" is widely held. In this monumental study, Schnabel gives us both a unified and detailed picture of the rise and growth of early Christian mission. He begins with a search for a missionary impulse in the Old Testament and Second Temple Judaism. He then weighs the evidence for a mission of Jesus to Gentiles. But the center of focus is the apostolic missionary activity as it is related in Acts, Paul's letters and the rest of the New Testament. Here is a study that seeks to describe all the evidence relevant to the missionary strategy and tactics of the early church, to explain the theological dimensions of the early Christian mission, and to integrate the numerous studies published in the last decades into a synthetic overall picture. Schnabel's detailed and immensely informed analysis will reward careful reading and reflection, and form a solid basis for a new understanding of the rise of Christianity and the nature of Christian mission--both then and now. When you order this item you will receive two volumes: Jesus and the Twelve (Volume 1) and Paul & the Early Church (Volume 2). An outline of both is in Volume 1 and the indexes are in Volume 2.

- Sales Rank: #677269 in Books
- Published on: 2004-12-08
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 2
- Dimensions: 9.25" h x 4.40" w x 6.30" l, 6.30 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 1972 pages

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Excellent Background Information and Analysis

By P. C. Lindstrom

This is a massive two-volume work that I have not read in its entirety. I don't know if I ever will get the chance to read through both volumes, cover to cover. I have found the book very helpful as a reference. For example, if you compare the background information that Schnabel provides on the Galilean ministry of the disciples in Matthew 10 to the information that most other commentaries provide, you will see that Schnabel has much more background information, which is why this is a valuable work. Commentaries by their nature cannot provide this same level of detail. I would highly recommend this work to pastors and teachers.

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Five Stars

By Charles Rawlings

A great overview of the apostles and Paul.

The print could be larger.

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The Best Study of New Testament Missions Ever Written!

By Dr. Marc Axelrod

Eckhard Schnabel has produced a mammoth two volume discussion of the historical and theological foundations of the Christian missionary movement. The thesis of *Early Christian Mission* is that the movement began with the ministry of the historical Jesus and was perpetuated by the work of his earliest followers. A key point for Schnabel is that there was no active Jewish mission to Gentiles prior to the ministry of Jesus. He painstakingly expounds salient texts in the Hebrew Bible as well as texts from other relevant Jewish texts to show that even though there were eschatological promises of a general conversion of Gentiles to the God of Israel, that there was no active Jewish mission. In making this assertion, Schnabel has some significant exegetical obstacles, namely the book of Jonah (where Schnabel explains that Jonah was trying to get the Ninevites to repent, not to convert), and texts such as Isaiah 26:19 (which he regrettably overlooks), and Matthew 23:15 (where Schnabel is forced to admit that the text may speak of a uniquely Pharisaic ministry to reach non-Jews.) The bottom line is that strictly speaking, the Christian mission cannot be considered the first actively Jewish effort to reach Gentiles.

But this early misstep for the most part does not affect later assertions. Schnabel is certainly right to say that the historical Jesus began a unique ministry to the people of Israel while not ignoring the needs of inquiring Gentiles. He explains that Jesus could have easily visited the 175 towns and villages of Galilee, in accordance with the summaries in texts such as Matthew 9:36. He shows that Jesus called twelve apostles to train them as fishers of men and that they learned from observing Jesus that the good news of the arrival of God's kingdom needed to be proclaimed in towns and villages to the poor and the wealthy, to the educated and the uneducated, both in word and deed.

Schnabel also contends that contrary to popular opinion, it didn't take until the martyrdom of Stephen to realize that the gospel should be preached to Gentiles. They were aware of the Lord's commission as recorded in Matthew 28 and Luke 24. Moreover, Matthias was chosen by lot as one who would be a witness

of Christ's resurrection. Furthermore, Peter's ministry on the day of Pentecost and the subsequent boldness of the apostles (Acts 4:13, 5:32) demonstrates that they were ready and able for ministry. It is tempting to point out that Luke mentions no ministry outside Judea until after the martyrdom of Stephen, but it is hasty to conclude that this was because of fear or ignorance. Schnabel's conservative reconstruction is quite plausible.

Schnabel also shows that repentance and forgiveness of sins in Jesus alone as Messiah of Israel was the consistent message of all of the apostles, and that any differences between the theology of Peter, James, John, and Paul are exaggerated. He also shows how the apostles could have obtained geographical and ethnographical information from libraries and public archives

He also discusses the historical plausibility of a mission by Thomas to India and how the third century Acts of Thomas may contain kernels of historical truth, including a reference to the Indian leader Gondopernes.

The second volume of Schnabel's work is a description of Paul's ministry. He explains that we cannot see his ministry as strictly a ministry to Gentiles, because Paul always had an inward desire to reach some of his own people with the gospel of Christ. He also shows how Paul not only followed a planned out itinerary, but that he was also open to the leading of the Spirit and was willing to avoid areas where the Spirit didn't want to him to go.

All through the work, Schnabel gives helpful and tremendously detailed descriptions of villages and hamlets throughout the Roman world and throughout the Middle East. The massive amount of information in these two volumes makes it easy to see how scholars will be using this work for decades to come.

Yet for those of us who believe in the historical reliability of the Bible, many of the findings will seem redundant. The real value of this work is in the detailed histories of the little known areas where the apostles may have traveled, as well as the fascinating interactions with other scholars. The book is a treasure trove of information about the mission of the early church and I highly recommend it.

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"As strange as it may seem, since the time of Adolf von Harnack at the turn of the twentieth century there has never been an attempt at a comprehensive critical account of the earliest period of Christian missions. Now in his massive and magisterial two-volume work that ignores neither history nor theology, Eckhard Schnabel has sought to remedy this gap in scholarly research. I predict that scholars will be interacting with this work for decades to come because of its thoroughness, meticulous attention to detail, and integration of knowledge from fields as wide-ranging as archaeology, classics, Roman and Jewish history, linguistics, sociology and of course biblical studies. This is a book every serious student of early Christianity must have on his shelf. There is nothing else quite like it." (Ben Witherington III, Asbury Theological Seminary)

"The publication in English of Eckhard Schnabel's magisterial work on early Christian mission is a major event for which both author and publisher are to be congratulated most warmly. This amazing achievement, which carefully sets the Christian mission within its wide-ranging historical and geographical contexts, and considers the mission theology of the biblical material, fills a vast gap left for more than one hundred years since the appearance of Adolf von Harnack's work on the spread of Christianity. Whether it is the relevant teaching of the Old Testament on this theme, the nature of Jesus' mission and that of his apostles, the mission theology of each of the Evangelists, what the Acts of the Apostles tells us about the spread of Christianity, or the motivation, practice and theology of Paul's missionary endeavors, Dr. Schnabel's comprehensive volume

is a profoundly reliable guide, and provides countless insights that will inform and inspire the reader. A former missionary to the Philippines, he writes fully, judiciously and with conviction about a subject that lies close to his heart. It is an outstanding work to which I shall return again and again." (Peter T. O'Brien, Moore Theological College)

"The sheer size of this book demonstrates not only the fantastically wide knowledge of its author but also and above all the way in which the activity of mission permeates the New Testament story. There is nothing else available that can compare with this major treatment which discusses every aspect of the subject in the light of constant, critical interaction with current scholarship and yet manages to remain beautifully clear and immensely readable. This book is, quite simply, indispensable for the New Testament student." (I. Howard Marshall, University of Aberdeen)

"Comparatively few biblical studies of mission exist. Those that do were written primarily by missiologists. Most New Testament scholars, even a number of fairly conservative ones, doubt that Second Temple Judaism or even Jesus himself significantly foreshadowed the missionary zeal of the early church beyond Jewish circles. What would a comprehensive study of the relevant New Testament data yield, especially if prefaced by a survey of Old Testament and intertestamental developments, and undertaken by someone who has mastered the secondary New Testament literature in all three major European languages? The result is a magnum opus, for both Schnabel and the discipline, that should be the defining work on this topic for years to come." (Craig L. Blomberg, Denver Seminary)

About the Author

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