

**A BOOK REVIEW**  
**“MATTHEW TO ACTS/THE NEW TESTAMENT BIOGRAPHIES OF JESUS AND THE BEGINNINGS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH”**

**FEBRUARY 28, 2026**

**TITLE OF BOOK:** “Matthew to Acts/The New Testament Biographies of Jesus, and the Beginnings of the Christian Church”.

**AUTHOR:** Philip McCarty, *who* holds an M.A. Degree in Christian Thought from Bethel Seminary, and who has engaged in studying and teaching the Bible for almost forty years, and who currently teaches a weekly Bible study and facilitates an apologetics group for his home church, Woodcrest Chapel of Columbia, Missouri. Phil has authored a number of other books, including: *God: A Self Portrait; All the Way from Kingdom Come: Basic Future Events; And God Said, “Let’s Babel”: The Bible as Cross-Cultural Communication; and Hebrews to Revelation: New Testament Letters Not Written by the Apostle Paul* (This latter book was reviewed, earlier, by your Reviewer, and the Review of that book appears on the TEI Website. The book reviewed here, and that book, are excellent complements for each other. As your Reviewer said in the earlier Review, I have known Phil for many years, and I have had the privilege of learning from him and co-teaching with him, and know him to be an extremely gifted student of, and teacher of the Bible.)

**PUBLISHER AND DATE OF PUBLICATION:** iUniverse, 2025.

**FIRST IMPRESSIONS**

Since, as stated above, I, your Reviewer, have known our author, Philip McCarty, for many years, and since I have taught with him and learned from him, I know him to be an outstanding student of, and teacher of the Bible and related subjects. I know Phil to be an extremely talented Bible teacher. Therefore, as I approached this book, as I did Phil’s earlier book (which I have Reviewed), *Hebrews to Revelation: New Testament Letters Not Written by the Apostle Paul*, I expected to find (as I did with that earlier book) a book which would be extremely helpful to me and to the everyday, ordinary (although none are really “ordinary”) Christian in our daily Bible reading and devotional activities, and which would also be of great help to Pastors and other Christian Ministers and Leaders in their efforts to prepare a message (a sermon) about any of the New Testament books, or parts of any of such books, which is a part the subject matter of the earlier book or which is a part of the subject matter of this book, or in their efforts to teach about any of such subjects. I found this book to be one which wonderfully fulfills that expectation, but which also does far more than that. Phil, in this book, takes, in extended, separate Chapters, each of the Gospels and the Book of Acts, and provides a verse by verse, passage by passage analysis and commentary about the verse or passage, and, where appropriate, ties it in with the relevant passages of the Old Testament which were referenced by or had to be taken into account by the author of the Gospel or the Book of Acts. These individual Chapters of the book (i.e. the ones which cover, in detail, one of the four Gospels or the Book of Acts) are of huge value, but, at least of equal value, and perhaps of even greater value are:

1) The First 43 Pages of the Book, a part of the Introduction, in which Phil covers, in great detail:

- a) The Proof that Jesus lived, and the fact that there were numerous reliable witnesses to his life, death and resurrection, whose testimony can be believed,
- b) Why we find what we find about Jesus, an important historical figure in sources outside of the Bible, and why we don't find more such information in sources outside of the Bible,
- c) What other writings about Jesus, other than the Gospels, exist,
- d) Other facts that tell us that Jesus of Nazareth did live,
- e) THE ORAL TRADITION (I think that this part of this book, pages 9-20, is worth its weight in gold. If a reader gets nothing out of this book, other than the contents of these pages, 9-20, about the Oral Tradition, he or she will have acquired hugely valuable knowledge which provides convincing proof that the Bible is reliable, proof which might well be more conclusive than that provided by the belief which some of us hold or have held that each of the books of the Bible was initially written and assembled by its human author, when, in fact, the contents of most of the Bible's books were memorized and passed down orally for many, many years, before those contents were reduced to written, textual format. Phil describes, in marvelous detail, how the information retention and transmission methodologies of the Biblical times were "oral traditions" not "textual traditions", and how the people of those times were accustomed to receiving their information orally, as opposed to by text. If you study these pages of this book, you will not only learn of the Oral Tradition of the Biblical Times, but will also be even more convinced than you are that the contents of the Bible are reliable.)
- f) How the books of the New Testament were assembled, and were approved for incorporation into the Canon of the New Testament-how some books were determined to be proper Scripture, and others were determined to not be such.
- g) Why some of the so-called "OTHER GOSPELS" were excluded.
- h) Why we can have confidence that the manuscripts that have been used to translate into our Bibles of today have the same content as the original manuscripts,
- i) Why we can have confidence that the Gospels are reliable in What They Present.

In other words, the first 43 pages of this book help us to be convinced, and to help others to be convinced, that the Bible is reliable. We can TRUST THE BIBLE. These pages are absolutely marvelous and are worth their weight in gold.

2) The Appendices: In pages 671-702 of this book, Phil includes some very valuable Appendices which are, at least for me, extremely helpful in solidifying my beliefs about some essential tenets of the Christian Faith, as follows

- a) Appendix 1: Did John the Baptist believe that Jesus was Divine, that he was the Messiah, and God in the Flesh? (What Did John the Baptist know and believe about the Christ, about Jesus?)
- b) Appendix 2: The Passover Feast, what was it and what was its significance and why is it important?
- c) Appendix 3: Crucifixion: What did Jesus go through during the time we call "the Passion"? When did this time actually begin, what were its events, etc?
- d) Appendix 4: The Historical Resurrection of Jesus: i) Why Is the Resurrection Important?; ii) What did it mean to the people of that day?; iii) The Most Improbable Explanation For the Resurrection is that it is "Improbable"; iv) What is the evidence that the Crucifixion occurred, that Jesus died, and that Jesus was Resurrected from Death?
- e) The Probability of the Truth of the Narrative of the Resurrection of Jesus versus other Theories.

Again, the information of these Appendices, assembled in one place, in easily read format, will be of huge value to you, Dear Reader, and to Christian Pastors, Leaders and Teachers. If nothing else, any reader or Christian Student will be benefitted by the first 43 pages of this book and the Appendices of this book. Phil has to be commended for putting this information together, in highly readable format, in one place.

### **WHAT IS THE AUTHOR DOING WITH WHAT THE AUTHOR IS SAYING?**

I think that the answer to this question is adequately provided by the above Section of this Review. However, because I have such huge admiration and respect for our author, Philip McCarty, I don't want to short change this Review of his book. Phil, a gifted, highly motivated Bible teacher, wants his students, and the readers of this book, to have a clear understanding that the Bible is reliable, and, in particular, that four Gospels and the Book of Acts are reliable. He then wants them to understand just how a careful Bible reader might read, meditate upon, and have a good understanding of each of the verses/passages of each of the four Gospels and the Book of Acts. Therefore, in addition to the hugely valuable information provided, as described above, by the first 43 pages of the book and the Appendices (all as described in the forgoing section of this Review) Phil, painstakingly takes, in an extended, verse by verse, line by line, discussion of each of the four Gospels and the book of Acts. He does so in separate Chapters. Each Chapter covers one of the four Gospels or the Book of Acts. In the separate Chapter for each of the Gospels and Acts, Phil, first, provides a very valuable Introduction to the book, in which he introduces its author and its intended audience, and the goals of that author for that audience. He then takes the Gospel or Acts, and takes it verse by verse, and describes the verse, and its literary and historical context, and, where appropriate, he takes the Reader back to any Old Testament narrative, verse or passage to which the author of the Gospel or Acts meant to refer in the verse under study, or to which that author had to have had in mind in what he said in the verse under study. Where appropriate, Phil provides his personal remarks or commentary or conclusions about the teachings of the passage under study, or about how its teachings might be applied today. In some cases, you might not agree with Phil's commentary. In some cases, I found myself as being a bit questioning of that commentary. That aside, Phil's analysis and commentary about a passage forces you, the Reader, to do what you should always be doing in you Bible reading, which is to meditate upon that which you have read. What does it truly say? What does it truly mean? What does it cause me to understand about God, or about myself, or about my relationship to God or with others? I will discuss the possible uses of this book to a greater extent in the following section of this Review.

I cannot begin to even contemplate the amount of work Phil has put into this marvelous book. All I can do is to thank him for it.

### **HOW TO READ OR USE THIS BOOK**

While I strongly suggest that you, Dear Reader, read and consider the first 43 pages of this book, and the Appendices described above, I, for obvious reasons, do not suggest that you sit down and read, cover to cover, the other over 600 pages of this lengthy book, but I do have some suggestions about how you can and should use this book. What I do suggest is that we consider the wonderful uses for this book. I suggest that they are as follows;

1) FOR DAILY DEVOTIONALS: As mentioned near the conclusion of the preceding section of this Review, I believe that this book can serve as a very valuable addition to the materials used by each of us in our daily Bible reading, devotional activities. I know that you, like me, try to read the Bible, daily.

I have, for the past 5 years, used a Devotional book which includes the entire New Testament, with its various books and the parts of those books to be read and studied on a daily basis. For example, I am now, in that Devotional (as of February 28) up to the Gospel of Mark. What I am trying to do, is to read the verses which appear in the Devotional, and to consider those, and to them immediately read the companion section of Phil's book. I followed this process through the Gospel of Matthew, and have continued, on, through the Gospel of Mark. Whether or not you use a similar Devotional book, or just read the Bible on a daily basis, I would suggest that, when you get to the New Testament, you should accompany your reading of the Gospels and the Book of Acts, with the companion parts this book of Phil's. When you get to the Non-Pauline Epistles then you should use the other book of Phil's, which I Reviewed earlier and which is referred to above. I think that, if you follow this practice, as I am trying to do, you will find that your daily Bible Devotional reading is greatly enhanced. I have sure found it to be so.

2) FOR PASTORS AND THOSE DELIVERING A SUNDAY MESSAGE OR LEADING A SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS OR SIMILAR GATHERING: If you are a Pastor teaching or preaching on one of the Gospels or Acts, or one of the Epistles or Revelation (which is an Epistle) covered by Phil's other book, the one I reviewed earlier, or if you are teaching or leading a class which is discussing one of the Gospels, Acts, or one of the Epistles or Revelation covered by either of Phil's books, then I think you will be greatly helped in the preparation of your message or in preparing for teaching or leading your class by using Phil's book in connection with your preparations.

3) A BIBLE STUDY: If you are facilitating or participating in the type of Bible Study in which Christians often participate, then I believe that you will be greatly aided in bringing some true "depth" to your study group by coupling the Bible reading and discussion with what you will find in one of Phil's books.

So, as I view Phil's book, the one Reviewed here and the one Reviewed earlier (which is mentioned above), I find that each of such books as being a very valuable devotional aid, study aid, research aid and teaching/preaching aid as described above. I hope that, in viewing Phil's books in this fashion, as opposed to being books that you sit down and read from page 1 to the ending page, I have not done such books an injustice.

**SHOULD THIS BOOK BE RETAINED IN THE TEI LIBRARY?/ WOULD THIS BOOK BE USEFUL IN CONNECTION WITH ANY TEI/ECLI CLASS?**

This book should, absolutely, be retained in the TEI library, and should be made available to the Pastors, Ministers, Church Leaders and Students who are the patrons of that library so that it can be readily used by them for the uses described in the above Section of this Review. Insofar as using this book in a TEI/ECLI class is concerned, its best use might then be in connection with, and as a part of a Case Study in a class, course or discussion of Biblical Hermeneutics. Phil provides great insights into the proper interpretation of, analysis of and current applications of each of the verses of each of the Gospels and Acts. These insights would be of great use in such a Case Study.

Thanks to Phil for this wonderful book.

Thank You, Your Reviewer  
Dan Simon