

North Chesterfield MMA 2008-2009

WEDNESDAY 17 JUNE 2009

Holy Scripture: Gospels

- Matthew, Mark, Luke: Synoptic Gospels; share material. *What Jesus did*.
- John: more reflective, *The meaning and implications of what Jesus did*.
- All four probably anonymous - names only added later to distinguish them.
 - Jewish Herald - Matthew
 - New York Times - Mark
 - Civil Service exposition for foreigners - Luke
 - Reflective recollections by a personal friend - John
- Why were they written at all? Implications?

Matthew

- Don't know who wrote it; attributed to Matthew (Levi) the tax collector (Lk: 5:27).
- Most scholars agree it was written after Mark's Gospel c 50-90
- First of the four because of its sensitivity to Jewish readers eg Kingdom of Heaven (Mt 4:17) instead of Kingdom of God (Mk 1:15) and it more than others bridges the OT and NT.
- Keen to stress Christianity *fills out*, not cancels, Judaism. Uses quotes from OT showing Jesus as the Messiah (1:18-23; 2:1-6; 2:14-15; 2:16-18; 4:12-16; 8:16-17)
- Set in 5 blocks to mirror the Pentateuch. Each block ends "when Jesus had finished".
- Not exclusively written for the Jews. Matthew also stresses Jesus the Messiah for the whole of humanity eg inclusion of gentile women in family tree (1:1-16) and 8:10; 15:21-28. He commends believing gentiles over sceptical Jews. Contains the Great Commission (Mt 28:18-20). It is the only Gospel to refer to *the Church*.
- Possibly written either in Jerusalem or Syria for a mixed congregation

Mark

- Tradition says written by John Mark (Mk 14:51-52). Possible autobiographical reference. Believed to be largely based on personal experience and recollections of apostle Peter.
- Likely to be the first Gospel written c 65-70.
- Evidence that Mk 16:9-20 was added later to round off an abrupt ending.
- Seems to have been written for non-Jewish readership. He explains customs Jews would have known about. Compare Mk 7:1-5 with Mt 15:1-2. Centres on Jesus the man of action - newspaper style with lots of action words e.g. "Immediately". Or child's account.
- Two parts
 - Part 1 Who Jesus was e.g. 5:41-42
 - Part 2 What He came to do e.g. 8:27-31
- Tone is one of encouragement to Christians under persecution. Suggestion that it was written for the Christians in Rome.

Luke

- Largest of the Gospels and the only one with a sequel (Acts).
- Who was Theophilus? a person . a "friend of God" i.e. Christian community. a codeword for Titus Flavius Clemens nephew of Emperor Vespasian.
- Was the purpose to allay fears about the "New religion" and its challenge to Roman gods?
- Tradition is that Luke was a doctor, and friend and colleague of Paul.
- Better Greek than Mark!
- Written possible AD 60-70.
- A missive addressed to the gentiles, and women - Jesus is for all.
- Themes of the Gospel:
 - Jesus the Radical (7:36-50; 8:1-3; ,40-56; 9:37-43, 46-48; 10:38-42, 18:15-17)
 - Meaning of salvation (1:69,71,77; 2:11,30 ; 3:6)
 - The Joy of praise to God (1:14,44,58; 2:10,17,21)
 - The role of the Holy Spirit (1:35; 5:16; 6:12;9:18,28 ; 10:21)
 - Importance of Prayer (3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28; 11:1-13; 18:1-4; 22:32,44; 23:46)
- The overall theme is a disciple is one who journeys with Jesus. Central section is called the travel narrative (9:51 - 19:45)

John

- Author: attributed to "The disciple whom Jesus loved" John 21:20-24.
- Remit: (20:3) "...That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.."
- Date approx end of 1st Century AD. Written for Jewish and Greek readers.
- Introduces *logos* – reason (logic) – roots in OT *sofia* and Greek Philosophy where *logos* is system underlying all things (natural science). God is natural science? Heraclitus.
- Themes:
 - Jesus – Majestic and authoritative. Certainly not the cosy Jesus of some people.
 - Much greater discourse on the identity of Jesus.
 - Only lists 7 of the miracles of Jesus and these are listed as signs as to the identity of Jesus (2:1-11; 4:46-54; 5:2-9; 6:1-4, 16-21; 9:1-7; 11:1-44).
 - Gospel contains the 7 'I am' sayings each graphically illustrated: 6:35; 8:12; 10:7; 10:11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1. But who is speaking here?
 - Bread of Life – after the feeding of the 5000 (6:1-14).
 - Light of the World – blind to see (9:1-7).
 - Resurrection and the Life – after Lazarus (11:38-44).

Synoptics and John

- Uncertain if John made use of synoptics.
- They reinforce each other and sometimes clarify each other.
- Theological investigation into the Gospels.
- Little investigation as to compilation until 20th Century.
- Before 1915 they were seen as unique documents standing timeless and separate from others shaped by their time. 1915 CW Votow proposed that Gospels formed part of the popular biography genre of their time.

Form Criticism

Gospels are collections of traditions about the life and teaching of Jesus rather than the creative work of particular authors. The collections of writings can be grouped in to different forms

Paradigm	Stories with a punch line, memorable slogans eg Mk 2:1-3:6
Tales	Stories told for the sake of a good story. Many of the miracles possibly to rival the stories told about the Greek/Roman gods and win converts
Legends	Similar to the lives of the saints; told to glorify the person; Mt 14:28-33; 16:13-23, 27:3-8; Lk 24:1-49
Myths	Human interaction with the spiritual e.g. Jesus baptism (Mk 1:9-11) temptations (Mt 4:1-11 parallel in Luke) Transfiguration (Mk 9:2-8)
Exhortations	Teaching – see parables

Redaction Criticism

Whereas form criticism was concerned to uncover the very earliest beginnings of the stories about Jesus and trace the history of the material before the Gospels, *redaction* looks at how the individual authors used the materials that were handed to them.

Narrative criticism

This holds that the evangelists were creative writers taking their sources and shaping them in ways appropriate to their readership;- the popular biography now seems the category of popular choice....what comes around goes around!

The Synoptic puzzle

- Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:1-11): same sayings appear in different context in Luke.
- These blocks of text, know as **Pericopes** are like 'pearls on a string' (K L Schmidt).
- Matthew and Luke have much in common which is absent in Mark e.g. Baptism, temptation of Christ and the healing of the Centurion's servant. The assumption is that Matthew and Luke used the same collection of sayings, known as:
- Q or Quelle (German for source). This is believed to be a written document now lost but whose original order is preserved in Luke

Probably Mark first, then Matthew and Luke used Mark together with Q. Who knows for sure?