

# **Synoptic Gospels**

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**Dr. Robert Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Lecture 1A**

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**Historical Survey of Approaches to the Synoptic Gospels**

Good morning! This is a recording of my Synoptic Gospels course taught a number of times at Biblical Theological Seminary in the suburbs of Philadelphia. Lord willing, we are going to try and cover about twelve big topics here. We are going to start with “The Historical Jesus”—looking a little bit at theological views of Jesus, and then allegedly historical views of Jesus, looking at some of the pictures of Jesus suggested by deism, rationalism, idealism, romanticism, skepticism. Then we’ll take a look at the present situation regarding Jesus, with some more popular books that have come out in the last generation. And then probably a short look at the Jesus Seminar, and come back and make a summary on liberal views of Jesus and such. That’s our big first topic of about twelve.

Then we’re going to take some time to look at the Jewish background to the New Testament, some of the ancient sources, and Daniel’s over-view of the Inter-testament Period; and then the rule of the Persians and the Greeks, followed by the Hasmoneans and the Romans. We will think a little bit of Messianic expectation at the time of Jesus. Then go beyond the ministry of Jesus to look at the end of the Jewish state and then what happened after the fall of Jerusalem.

Then we’re going to do one of our three looks at exegesis, starting with an introduction to exegesis, and think a little bit about how we interpret narratives in the Gospels. Then we’ll look at Matthew 2 at the visit of the wise men. Then we will come back to what I think of as our background type of work and look at authorship and date of the Synoptic Gospels. Then we’ll look at another passage: We will look at how to interpret parables and look at the Jesus parable of the marriage banquet in Matthew 22.

For our sixth topic we’ll be looking at the Gospels as literary works. For the seventh, we’ll look at the synoptic problem and then at the geography of

Palestine, both the land as a whole and Jerusalem specifically. The geography is pretty similar for Palestine over the whole period, but obviously Jerusalem is somewhat different. We'll look at some political features as well. Then we'll look at—I guess we're looking at four biblical accounts here—we'll look at how to interpret miracle accounts and look at the incident with the demons and the pigs, Mark 5: 1-20.

Then we want to think a little bit about biblical theology of the Synoptics, looking especially at what Jesus has to say about the Kingdom. Then as our fourth passage we want to look at how to interpret controversy accounts and look at the incident in Luke 11 where Jesus is accused of being, what should we say, empowered by Beelzebub.

Finally, we want to close our discussion by looking at form criticism and redaction criticism. So that's our scheme if you like; Lord willing, we will try to carry that out.

### **The Historical Jesus**

So, let's jump in here and have a look at our first topic, which we call: "The Historical Jesus." Now, unless you've lived a very sheltered life, you're aware that people have enormously diverse views about Jesus. Some of these are motivated by their religious or world view, and others claim to be honestly grappling with historical data. Well, we're going to give a quick view of some influential modern views.

We're going to start out with basically religious views. The biblical data—and for this you really have to have read it and studied it yourself. Anybody can do that; it will take some time, but the biblical data point to Jesus who is somehow fully God and fully human. And we are not going to go into a discussion on that; that's theology. Some stuff will come up, obviously, in our discussion of the Synoptic Gospels. The other religious alternatives could be divided into two big categories. One of them is that Jesus is only human, not God in any real sense. The

other one is that Jesus is divine in some sense, but not in the biblical sense of being “one person of the Triune God,” and fully God and fully man.

### **Jesus was only human and not God in any real sense**

#### **Atheism**

So, a very quick view of the first of these: Jesus was only human, not God in any real sense. We start with a remark or two about atheism. Obviously, in atheism the view is there’s no God, so Jesus can’t very well be God in any sense then. So Jesus was at best only human, and many atheists claim that Jesus was fictional, that he never existed at all. In fact, this idea of the “fictional Jesus” was at one time the standard Communist view. I don’t know where they stand now on that question.

#### **Islam**

A second view of a rather different sort, but still under “only human and not God in any real sense,” is that of Islam. Islam does believe in God though it is strictly monotheistic, not Trinitarian. They believe that Jesus was a true prophet, that he was actually born of a virgin (which they don’t claim for any of the other prophets), that he worked miracles, which they don’t claim even for Mohammed—the Koran doesn’t claim for Mohammed, although some of the Hadiths do. They claim that Jesus will one day return to reign as Messiah, but he’s not God. As I said, Allah is strictly one, and he has no son. They also claim, there’s probably some dispute on this, but this is a general reading of the Koran, that Jesus did not die on the cross, but rather he was snatched to heaven and a substitute was put in his place. So that’s a quick tour of Islam, and a lot more could be said on any of these.

#### **Old Liberalism**

We move to two ideas that has grown more directly out of Christianity, and the first of these is what I call “Old Liberalism.” This is the form of liberalism rising out of Christendom back in the, probably already starting in the early 1700s, but then gaining some steam by the late 1700s, and then running through the

1800s and through the twentieth century even. Basically, all liberalism believes that the Gospels contain a great deal of legendary material because “miracles don’t happen.” Well, that’s pretty straightforward—if miracles don’t happen, the Gospels have lots of miracles so they can’t be very reliable. So their claim is, God does exist. God only worked providentially through Jesus, but somehow people misunderstood him and he was deified by the early Gentile Christians. He was some sort of ethical teacher, as perhaps the commonest view of old liberalism. And that he had more of God in him than others did. I believe it was Harry Emerson Fosdick who said that, “Jesus was Divine, but so was my mother” (something of that sort). Jesus died on the cross as an example, but his Resurrection was only a spiritual resurrection. Even Karl Barth was once asked by Carl Henry, I believe, “If a newspaper reporter had been at the tomb Easter morning, would he have anything to report?” And Barth would not answer that directly.

### **Neo-Orthodoxy**

We move on to a development out of old liberalism, which has often been called Neo-Orthodoxy, and that’s got a wide range of views as well. At one time Bultmann was even thought to be Neo-Orthodox, although later on that generally was dropped. Similar view of the Gospels to old liberalism; that is that miracle don’t happen and such. But Neo-Orthodoxy feels that the Jesus of history is not nearly as important as the Christ of faith. So you tend to get this two level kind of approach to things, and a Christian should be interested in the Christ of faith rather than in the Jesus of history.

This seems to be an attempt to rescue, if you like, religious value, while accepting this so called “scientific history” in which miracles do not occur. So that’s a very whirlwind view of four different approaches to the idea that Jesus is only human but not God in any real sense.

## **Jesus Is Divine in Some Sense but Not In the Biblical Sense**

### **Jehovah Witnesses**

A second sort of category is that Jesus is divine in some sense but not in the Biblical sense. And here we look first of all at Jehovah's Witnesses. The Jehovah's Witnesses believe in God that works miracles, etc., though God is more like the God of Islam in the sense that he's strictly one. So Jesus is a small "g" god if you like. In one of the suggestions, and I don't always see official pronouncements on at the present, Jesus is some sort of a reincarnation you might say—they don't use that term—of the Archangel Michael. Michael was taken out of existence, but his life force was put into Jesus then as he was created, if you like, and that by this Archangel Michael, that's the way in which the Jehovah God had created all things. He was God's agent in creation. So they are trying to handle some of the Biblical passages that picture Jesus as God's agent in creation. So, Jesus in Jehovah Witness' view is not Almighty God, and he is not to be worshipped. He was born of a virgin, he worked miracles, and he died on the cross, but for some reason they have his body dissolving in the tomb; but he's one day going to return to set up an earthly kingdom for his faithful witnesses, Jehovah's Witnesses. So we have a version of Jesus that is divine in some sense but not in the biblical sense.

### **Mormonism**

Mormonism: I'll try and avoid getting carried away on Mormonism here, which I've done a fair bit of work on their historical background. But the *Book of Mormon* is fairly orthodox, more or less Trinitarian in its view of Jesus; Jesus is viewed as virgin born, the Messiah, the miracle worker, and rose from the dead. But they have some later scriptures; they have the work called *The Pearl of Great Price* and another work called *The Doctrines and Covenants*. According to these later scriptures, the teaching of Mormonism is that humans can become gods like Jesus did, and like the Father did. The Father was once man. Jesus was merely a man at the time he was on earth, though he was unusual in that he was the

firstborn spiritual son of his father and his spiritual mother in heaven. He was sent from heaven when Mary conceived, and since his ascension, he has become a god. His death however only saves us from original sin, and we have to do most of the rest of the work to be satisfactory to God and to enter into the highest level of heaven.

### **The New Age Movement**

I list a third category here under Jesus was God in some sense but not in the biblical sense: the New Age movement. The New Age movement is a very diverse group of views that are characterized, if you like, by a mixture of western attitudes towards personality and that sort of thing, with elements that come from Hinduism and Buddhism, typically reincarnation. Generally, Jesus is viewed as one of the great, but usually not the greatest, of what they call the ascended masters, ones who have through their spiritual effort and enlightenment have risen far above the level of most humans. You, too, in the New Age movement can become a god by one or more techniques, which differ from guru to guru. The term “Christ” in the New Age movement is typically used for a level of spiritual enlightenment and was not an office held uniquely by Jesus. I have a little PowerPoint on our IBRI website called “Jesus in New Age,” which sketches the views of Jesus by two of the new age teachers, Edgar Casey and Benjamin Creme.

So that’s a kind of quick tour of what we might call various religious views; that does not cover the whole spectrum but does give you an idea of the diversity that exists there.

### **Allegedly Historical Views**

We want to think next about what we might call “allegedly historical views.” In the past 200 years, there have been numerous attempts to produce a “real, historical” Jesus who is allegedly quite different than the person pictured in the Gospels. These attempts regularly assume that miracles do not occur—they wouldn’t have to do that, but that’s a characteristic of this whole run—because they have been disproved by science in some way. So that the Gospels, as I

mentioned before, filled as they are with miracles, cannot be reliable. Proponents of such views accept some of the Gospel material and reject the rest, and they differ on which they accept and which they reject, though they agree in rejecting miracles.

We're going to give some examples here that are characteristic of various philosophical movements over the past 200 years since before 1800. Albert Schweitzer in his book written just after 1900, called *The Quest of Historical Jesus*, discusses over a hundred such liberal biographies of Christ, if you like. I remember myself when I first read this, which was a long time ago, that when you read the first chapter it's kind of scary. You say, "Wow, what if Jesus were really like this," but after you've read 50 or 75 of them, you say, "These guys are all shooting in the dark!" They have thrown out something that is crucial to Christianity, and then they basically are floundering around after that in spite of the fact that these people are intelligent and many of them very considerable scholars.

Well, we're going to have a look, and we'll classify each one of these sort of tentatively under a philosophical view, although the guys who are doing this are not philosophers; but they basically held to some sort of philosophy of the sort.

### **Deism**

So we start with Deism first of all. Deism sees God as the creator but, He's sort of the "Creator-watchmaker." He puts together the universe, but then he doesn't mess with it after that. He's one that doesn't intervene in human affairs. Just as it would be rather gosh for a watchmaker to keep opening up the back of a watch and fiddling with the stuff inside, so deists think that it would be very gosh of a God who kept, or keeps, doing miracles in the universe. I guess they don't consider the possibility that the universe might not be a watch, but might be something like a guitar, or a violin, or an interactive game in which it's designed for the player, if you like, who is also the maker in this case, to intervene to do various things with this particular tool: the universe.

Well, back to our topic; we want to think a little bit about Herman Samuel Reimarus and his book which was actually a collection of fragments; his whole book that he had prepared was never published. The book is called the *Wolfenbüttel Fragments* and was published from 1774 to 1778. It was not published until after Reimarus died, and it was published in fragments and perhaps the whole thing would've eventually been published except for the reaction to the fragments that were published. The two that we would be interested in there are the ones that deal with Jesus, and one of these fragments is called "Concerning the Story of the Resurrection", and the other one is called "The Aims of Jesus and His Disciples." According to Reimarus, Jesus claimed to be a Jewish-type messiah, that is one who is going to come, rescue Israel from their political oppressors, bring them back to God and that sort of thing. And so, he then, Jesus thought he was this according to Reimarus, and so we made an attempt to do this but he made no attempt to found a new religion. He did, according to Reimarus, do some psychosomatic healings. You'll find that a lot of the early liberals at least believe that Jesus was able to do the kind of healings that I suppose non-Christians think that charismatics can do, or something of that sort: that they're not miraculous, but that they're some kind of psychosomatic, or hypnotic, or something of that sort, of healings.

Well, Jesus tried to start a revolt against Rome but failed, and so he was put to death as a revolutionary. However, after his death, his disciples realized that he had failed, but they had gotten out of the habit of working, and as everyone who is not a pastor knows, pastors don't do anything but crank out a 30 minute sermon or a 15 minute sermon once a week, and so it's a pretty cushy life; and so these disciples, having gotten out of the habit of working, decided to start a new religion. And so they stole Jesus' body from the tomb, claimed he had risen from the dead, and claimed he had sent them out to preach this new religion. So they invented a new eschatology in which the Messiah would come back a second time.

Well, the publication of Reimarus' material created a sensation and destroyed his reputation and his family and discouraged any further publication of the fragments. So that was Reimarus. However, Reimarus had an effect besides the sensation: Reimarus' work opened for later liberal reconstructions, but which were less drastic in general. It also set a precedent for ignoring the Epistles in the New Testament, the Epistles of Paul and Peter and John, of emphasizing Jesus' end times teaching, his eschatological teaching, which Reimarus' and most liberals really do not like, and of claiming that much of the material in the Gospels was either the creation of the Apostles or the later church, rather than going back to Jesus. So that's Deism and Reimarus' "Wolfenbüttel Fragments." 20:02

### **Exploring Rationalism vs. Revelation; Does Moral Truth Truly Count?**

#### **Heinrich Paulus**

We move on about fifty years to Rationalism, and Rationalism is a worldview that thinks that revelation is unnecessary because moral truth is what really counts as it's eternal, and it can be deduced by good reasoning. That you don't really have to look too much around the world to see how things are, you can look inside your mind and see how things are. The idea had been around since Greco-Roman philosophers, and had been revived, if you like, even in the 1600's, but was coming on strong now in the early 1800's.

We want to look here at Heinrich Paulus, unlike Reimarus, Heinrich Paulus wrote a work; *Leben Jesu*, (*Life of Jesus*.) *Leben Jesu* is German. He wrote a sympathetic life of Christ, okay? So, he was attracted to Jesus, and at least liked his version of Jesus. And so, we see with Paulus what is perhaps more typical of what I mentioned as theological liberalism earlier. That is, Jesus was a great moral teacher of unusual insight and ability. Most of what Paulus taught has been forgotten today. The main impact of Paulus' work was his rationalistic treatment of miracles. Namely, he claimed the miracles really did happen, but they weren't

miraculous. They were misunderstood, non-supernatural events, and the disciples, or the people in the crowd, thought they were miraculous.

So, Jesus really did heal people, but it was by some unknown spiritual power, which worked on the nervous system, something like hypnosis or ESP, or something of that sort. Jesus, according to Paulus, also used natural medicine and diet, rather like today's holistic healers and health food people.

Jesus' nature miracles are obviously tougher to explain. Paulus suggested these following sorts of things varied from one to the other. Jesus walking on the water: he was really walking on the shore, or walking on a sand bar, and so when Peter steps out of the boat, he doesn't step on the sand bar and naturally he goes in and et cetera. So that's basically the problem there.

How about Jesus feeding the five thousand? Well, it turns out that about 2500 of them had quite substantial lunches hidden under their cloaks, but when this little boy brings out his loaves and fishes, that shames all the other people, and they bring theirs out and they share with them, and there's plenty for everybody.

What about Jesus' transfiguration? Well, you remember the disciples were about half-asleep when this happened. And they're up on the top of the mountain, and the sun is rising and it happens they're on the west side on the top of the mountain. Jesus is right on the top of the mountain and the sun is coming up behind him, and so it illuminates his hair and his clothes, et cetera. And so he shines like that, and these two distinguished guys from Jerusalem, they mistake as Moses and Elijah; so that's the transfiguration.

As for the resurrection of Lazarus and the others, Jesus recognized they were in a coma, and somehow managed to wake them up. Jesus' own resurrection was rather similar in that. He did not die on the cross, according to Paulus, but he went into a coma. The cool tomb and the aromatic spices revived him. The earthquake conveniently rolled the stone away, and Jesus appeared to his disciples for a while. But in fact, he was very badly damaged by the crucifixion, and so he later left them to die. His final departure, he walks up the hill, into the clouds and

they think it's an ascension. Well, that is Paulus: what we might call a rationalistic view of miracles.

The importance of Paulus' work was to spread such liberal views into what we would call Christian circles. So, deism had been rather distinct from Christianity. That's not to say that there weren't professing Christians who weren't actually deists, but now you begin to get this more rationalistic view of things in Christian circles, and you begin to get a liberalizing version of Christianity. That is, people who claim sympathy for Jesus, but still reject the miracles. Paulus did not lose his job, as presumably Reimarus would have if he had been still alive, or lose his prestige over the book, as in fact Reimarus did.

His rationalizing approach to miracles, though fairly quickly ridiculed even by liberals, is still used by them in some cases. So, occasionally we will see a Sunday school lesson on the feeding of the five thousand in a liberal Sunday school book, and it will be about sharing. Well, there's a little something about sharing there but that is surely not the major point of the actual miracle.

### **Idealism**

So, deism and rationalism. Now we turn to idealism, and idealism is, of course, used in a very broad way in popular speech today, but in philosophical circles, it is a type of a worldview. It is the idea that mind, or ideas, is the basic reality rather than matter. For instance, the cult we call Christian Science believes that matter doesn't really exist, that it is mind that is operating and that therefore if your mind can be enlightened in the right way, that will overcome your diseases because diseases are basically an illusion.

Well, we're going to look at David Friedrich Strauß and his work also called, *Leben Jesu*, (*Life of Jesus*), published in 1835, only seven years after Paulus' work. According to Strauß, the entire life of Jesus has been colored by mythological interpretation: and not just his birth and resurrection as had been

suggested by some of the slightly earlier liberals. Strauß defines “myth” here, as a “timeless religious truth, clothed in historical form.” So it is things that actually didn’t happen in history, but for teaching purposes, they are structured in a historical form. So kind of parabolic, if you like; something of that sort. And Strauß claimed that this historical form was often produced by using legendary materials. So to Strauß, the religious idea expressed in the life of Jesus is what is true, but the events didn’t really happen.

For example, the deity of Christ is not historical truth, according to Strauß, but rather it is the higher idea, the highest idea, ever conceived by man. That is, the unity of godhood, and manhood: that man and god are really the same, and that the deity of Christ is used as a mythical way of expressing this. That we are all divine brings us back to Harry Emerson Fosdick in his “My Mother was Divine,” et cetera.

In *Leben Jesu*, Strauß attacks both the orthodox and the rationalistic ideas of Jesus, especially mocking Paulus’ explanations that miracles which, of course, are not hard to mock as you’ve already seen. Yet Strauß produces few positive explanations of his own for the historical events. Probably because he was not greatly concerned with what actually happened. He is an idealist; history is not what matters. You see some of this already back in Plato, where he is concerned about ideas, and not about events in history.

Strauß’ book was met with rather strong reaction in his day because it was both anti-Christian, and anti-rationalistic. However, it laid the groundwork for Bultmann in the twentieth century whom we’ll say a bit about further on, and a de-mythologizing school of Bultmann’s time.

Strauß also posed three problems, problem areas we could say, which have continued to dominate liberal studies of Jesus to this very day. One of these is the problem of miracle versus myth. Strauß, in liberal circles, virtually ended the liberal acceptance of miracles in the Gospel account as historical. Only the healing accounts are accepted by some liberals today who say that Jesus did some

psychosomatic healing, as faith healers still do. Strauß raised this whole question of the Jesus of history versus the Christ of faith.

Strauß separated historical truth from religious value, and he favored a Christ of faith approach. Not all liberals have done that; some have gone in the other direction. We will find out what the real Jesus of history was like, and have the same religion as he did, or at least gain some ideas from him, or something of that sort.

A third area is the distinction between the gospel of John and the Synoptics. Strauß established a widespread rejection of John, the Gospel of John, by attacking its reliability more effectively than Reimarus had done earlier. So, that is idealism.

Next, Romanticism. Romanticism is a reaction against rationalism's emphasis on reason and logic. For Romanticism, emotions and intuition give insight which you cannot obtain through reason. So we'll stop there, and pick up after a short while.

### **Romanticism, a Reaction against Rationalism Focusing on the Emphasis of Reason and Logic**

We're going to look here at Romanticism, a reaction against rationalism with emphasis on reason and logic. For Romanticism emotions and intuition give insights, which you can obtain through reason. As Ernest Renan sees it (and he's the one to look at and his *Life of Jesus*, but in French *la Vie de Jesus*) as he sees it the Gospel picture of Jesus doesn't make sense with the miraculous removed, so he sorts the material into three different phases in Jesus' life. He sees Jesus as an ethical teacher first of all, then a revolutionary, then a martyr. Renan claimed that all three phases of this, all three of these views, ethical teacher, revolutionary and martyr were historical, but they got mixed together somehow in the Gospel accounts where they were mixed up chronologically, but he claimed that each facet was a distinct period in Jesus' life.

First of all he says Jesus was an ethical teacher. Jesus begins as an optimistic pleasant ethical teacher who learned to preach from John the Baptist. He returns to Galilee as a gentle teacher of love, attracts a devoted following of young men and women, plus a large group of charmed Galileans. He does no miracles except for some psycho-somatic healings. When he goes to Jerusalem, he finds that the rabbis will not accept him.

As a result, we enter phase two: he becomes a revolutionary and campaigns to get rid of the rabbis. He begins doing fake miracles to attract a larger following. Soon, Jesus realizes that his movement does not have enough popular support to beat the rabbis and that he cannot continue to stage miracles indefinitely without being discovered.

So we enter phase three where he decides he is going to throw off earthly ambitions and become a martyr. Before his death he starts a religious movement so the teachings will be preserved. He institutes the simple ceremonies of baptism and the Lord's Supper to give unity to the group, and he chooses his leaders that he calls the apostles, and he allows himself to be caught and dies on the cross. His strategy works. In fact, it works better than he expected because Mary Magdalene has a hallucination that Jesus is alive. That is Renan's life of Jesus.

Renan's work is important for spreading liberal reconstructions of Jesus' life to the popular, educated audiences because the previous books had all been written as rather technical works and particularly spread it into Catholicism, so we begin to see the beginning of liberal Catholicism about this time. Renan opened the door to the idea that reliability can be judged by aesthetics. God can't be that way because I don't like it, it isn't beautiful enough; and that idea has not gone away. His idea that the chronological framework of the gospels is untrustworthy will be picked up later in form criticism.

We come to the last of our tour then before we get to the present situation, and that is the philosophical view we call Skepticism. Skeptics are doubters to a greater degree than the positions above, feeling it's impossible to reconstruct the

life of Jesus. We are going to look at William Wrede and his work, which we'll stick with the English title *Messianic Secret* published in 1901, so just a couple years before Schweitzer's *Quest of the Historical Jesus*. Wrede reacts against the reconstructions that were popular at that time, somewhat like those sketched above, arguing that much in these pictures is obtained by reading between the lines and ignoring what Jesus had to say about the Second Coming: judgment, hell, and such, which modern theological liberalism tends to do as well. Wrede does not attempt to sketch a full scale life of Jesus but tries to solve a single problem. That problem is if Jesus never claimed to be Messiah as theological liberalism thought, why did he keep telling people to keep this a secret. If Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, why did he keep telling people to keep this a secret? Wrede's answer is that Mark invented the Messianic secret because Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah; but Mark and his circle thought that he was. Wrede comes to believe that Mark's whole narrative framework is unreliable—that only some of the individual stories and sayings in his gospel really happened.

At this point in our narrative of liberal lives of Jesus, notice that the liberals have now thrown out all the Gospels. John is late, Matthew and Luke build on Mark, and Mark is unreliable. We'll come back and discuss the Matthew and Luke building on Mark when we get to discuss our synoptic problem. This deep skepticism toward the Gospel accounts led the application of form criticism to the life of Christ by Rudolf Bultmann and others beginning about 1920 and thereafter brought a stop to the writing of scholarly liberal lives of Christ until about 1950. *Quest for the Historical Jesus* resumed in the 1950s, the so-called second quest by liberals who were dissatisfied with a particular form of extreme skepticism advocated by Bultmann, and we're now generally thought to be in the phase called the third quest. (I will not follow that up in great detail).

What I would like to look at is what we can call the present situation, and here we're going to sketch a number of things going on, but the present situation is characterized by considerable diversity. Renan made an observation back when he

wrote his life of Jesus that Jesus, once you remove the miracles, doesn't make sense; and so he started sorting various characteristics of Jesus into these three categories: the ethical teacher, the revolutionary, and the martyr, and so basically claimed there had been a chronological mix up. It is true that once the miraculous is excluded from Jesus' ministry, his personal life doesn't make sense, and a variety of possibilities can be imagined. Modern theories are often simply various combinations of previously noticed possibilities.

We're going to give here another fast sketch of some of the views advocated since World War II. We'll call these the post-Bultmanians: Schonfield's, *The Passover Plot*, John Marco Allegro's *Sacred Mushroom and the Cross*, and Morton Smith's *The Secret Gospel and Jesus the Magician*; and then we'll have a little bit to say about the Jesus Seminar.

Post-Bultmanian is a term for former students of Rudolf Bultmann, especially Gunther Bornkamm, Hans Conzelmann, Ernst Fuchs, Ernst Kasemann, (and those all sounded very German) and James M. Robinson, an American. Bornkamm was the only one of these who actually wrote a life of Christ, entitled *Jesus of Nazareth*, published in 1960 in the English translation. The others, however, wrote encyclopedia articles or journal articles. All are anti-supernatural, but all of them feel Bultmann went too far in his skepticism. They have more interest in history than he did, and they feel that the New Testament material gives us at least a feeling for what people thought about Jesus. In their own historical methodology, although still very skeptical, they ignore the Gospel of John; they use the Synoptics. They pick out the authentic incidences and sayings of Jesus using what they call a "method of dissonance." What's that? We'll take an example: Jesus himself was a Jew. His followers were Christians. Thus, any features of Jesus' reported teachings, which looked "Jewish," might go back to the Jews rather than to Jesus, okay? Any material which looks "Christian," may go back to the early Christians rather than to Jesus. Only that which is incomparable with both Judaism and Christianity likely goes back to Jesus.

### **Does Dissonance Have a Problem as a Methodology?**

So we examine this material to get Jesus' self-understanding. Well, that's a very minimalist approach to Jesus, but strangely enough, it does turn out some interesting results. I mentioned here that dissonance does have a problem as a methodology. Take Martin Luther: Martin Luther was a Catholic; his followers were Lutheran. So you throw away anything with Martin Luther that looks Catholic, and you get rid of all traditional Orthodox theology; and you throw away anything else that looks Lutheran, and you wind up with probably the *Bondage of the Will*, or something of that sort. But even that looks kind of Augustinian Catholic, if you like, so what do you do?

Well, let's look at some results from what the post-Bultmanians got: They did deduce some interesting results, which don't fit the liberal model very well. Take for instance Jesus' view of himself. Kasemann thought that there was a very distinct atmosphere on this question in the New Testament: that Jesus thought of himself as divinely and uniquely inspired, and that he was a "greater" than a prophet. Jesus, in fact, says Kasemann, made Messianic claims. Well, a lot of liberals do not want to go that way.

Ernst Fuchs, thinking of Jesus' view of himself, said, "Jesus claimed that he could forgive sins." What kind of person can forgive sins? Well, you remember the remark of the Jews when they heard Jesus say something like that. Then we think about Jesus' teachings, Kasemann concludes Jesus' main messages are, "God has come to give men what they don't deserve and to set them free from bondage." So we picture grace and redemption and Jesus' message according to Kasemann.

For Hans Conzelmann, Jesus spoke of a future kingdom, which in some sense is confronting us right now. That's rather interesting because when I was taking a New Testament course at Duke, not a conservative course, the big point

was made, “You got two elements that you see in the Gospel that are inconsistent: future kingdom, present kingdom.” But here Conzelmann says that “They’re both there; they’re both in Jesus.” So this point was regularly lost in older realism, which typically sets these two elements in contradiction. Whereas Christians in recent years have come to think in terms of the “already” and “not yet” as what’s going on there, and there is that real tension that really turns out to be a major feature of Christian theology.

For Jesus’ conduct Ernst Fuchs says, “Jesus’ actions show us that he submitted to God, yet he claims a unique authority seen, for instance, in his cleansing of the temple”. He also showed great graciousness to outcasts. Contrast Jesus’ attitude with the Pharisees’ attitude.

Well, that’s a quick tour of those, and these results seem rather minimal, but they’re striking. They suggest that Jesus is much more than liberals have granted and that they should reconsider their skepticism.

Well, we move on from the post-Bultmanians to look at Hugh Schonfield’s, *The Passover Plot*, 1966. Hugh Schonfield was a liberal, British Jew who worked on the “International Dead Sea Scroll Committee.” Apparently he had accepted the claims of Jesus at one point earlier in his career, but later gave it up. So he was apparently some sort of early Messianic Jew at one point. He is quite familiar with Evangelical interpretation of Old Testament prophecy. And if other liberals are familiar with that, they either just scorn it or they don’t take it into account at all, but Schonfield does. According to Schonfield, Jesus’ ministry is an elaborate plot to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies regarding the Messiah, especially his death and resurrection. In Schonfield’s view, Jesus, convinced that he is the Messiah, gathers disciples but avoids claiming publicly to be the Messiah for his own safety. Notice there, Schonfield has a nice explanation for the Messianic Secret. It’s not safe to claim to be the Messiah too early. There might be some other reasons as well, but that shows us that Wrede has built way too much on his Messianic Secret sort of thing. Eventually, however, Jesus is rejected in

Galilee and realizes that he has to die and rise again in order to fulfill Old Testament prophecy; probably thinking of Psalm 22 or Isaiah 53. Jesus decides however, to fake his death rather than trust God for his resurrection. He constructs a plot, using several assistants who are only in on part of the plot, so they don't know for sure what the other people are doing or even who the other people are. Lazarus' death and resurrection is faked to build tension with the authorities. The colt, for the triumphal entry, is arranged, forcing the Jewish authorities to take action to avoid a revolt. Jesus controls the timing of his arrest so they won't find him until a certain point, so that he will only be crucified for a few hours. And then when he is being crucified for the few hours, he shouts the code words, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani," and an assistant runs out with a sponge that drugs him and Jesus goes into a coma. Well, that's how Schonfield is headed.

Schonfield then believes that the plot, almost perfect, is ruined by the spear thrust of the Roman soldier. Jesus is taken down from the cross by Joseph of Arimathea, and an unnamed conspirator whom we'll call "X." That night, Jesus is removed from the tomb, taken to another place, and revived. He gives "X" a message to carry to the disciples. Message: tell them to meet me in Galilee. But, after "X" leaves, Jesus dies and "X" is trying to deliver the message but apparently does not realize that Jesus is dead. "X" tries to tell the women at the tomb the next morning, but they think that he is an angel. He tries to tell some disciples on the road to Emmaus, but they mistake him for Jesus. The confusion continues. In the appearances where Jesus was not immediately recognized, they are treated as those of "X." The clear and solid appearances are made up by the church later.

Well, Schonfield's story reflects the influence of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls with some emphasis on the Messianic expectations about that time. In fact, the Dead Sea Scrolls give us a lot of information in that direction that we hadn't have before. And it gives us a renewed appreciation for the Gospel of John as a source. It's peculiar in the daring treatment of Old Testament prophecies; it has the classic features of what we call a plot theory.

So that leads us to an aside for a moment on plot theories. A plot theory claims that some set of historical events can better be explained not by the stated, or surface, motivations etc., but by an unstated, secret, hidden plot. Some examples are the claim that Kennedy was killed by the CIA, or Lincoln was killed by the radical Republicans, or that Nine-Eleven disasters were actually staged by the US government. Plots clearly occurred in human history, okay? But plot theories face serious methodological problems. First, the better the plan, the more hidden it was and is, therefore the less useful our data is. The perfect plot does not fit the data at all. Therefore it is possible to construct far more plots than could actually happen. So that the chance of any one plot being true is really very, very small. It's impossible to prove a plot theory right or wrong before the last judgment. And it's very dangerous to hang one's worldview on a particular plot theory.

Let's have a look at John Marco Allegro, "*The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross*," 1970. John Marco Allegro was a professor at the University of Manchester in England and another British representative of the International Dead Sea Scroll team. You wonder about this team, huh? This book ruined his academic reputation. If you think that Schonfield has a plot theory, Allegro has a "super plot theory." More radical than Bultmann or Schonfield. Why? Well, Jesus never existed. Christianity never existed. Judaism never existed. Well, at least in this part of the first century.

### **Exploring the Theories of the Super-Secret Mushroom Fertility Cult and the Seven Pillars of Scholarly Wisdom**

Their [Jews and Christians] books and teachings are all expressions of code words used to disguise a super-secret mushroom fertility cult—a sex drug cult; a sort of thing that was popular in the seventies. Judaism and Christianity do not appear to be such now because the secrets were lost under persecution, and the

front organizations continued and developed on their own. Allegro tries to prove his position by etymology—the derivation of words. He tries to prove that the Old Testament and New Testament are filled with secret codes relating to hallucinogenic mushrooms and sexual orgies. He uses Latin, Greek, Arabic, Persian, Syriac, Hebrew, Aramaic, Sanskrit, Ugaritic, Acadian and Samaritan enough to snow all but the best linguists. That's John M. Allegro the Sacred Mushroom and the Cross.

Morton Smith wrote *The Secret Gospel*, 1973, and *Jesus the Magician*, 1978. Morton Smith was professor of ancient history at Columbia University. He earlier studied in Israel during the Second World War, got a Ph.D. at Hebrew University, and then later got a Th.D. at Harvard. Smith claims he discovered in 1958 at the Mar Saba Greek Orthodox Monastery in Israel a letter from Clement of Alexandria (who flourished about 200 A.D.) which, however, had been copied in the back of a Greek book published in the 1700s, which [the letter] was in the blank pages in the back. The book with letter, if it ever existed, has disappeared. For the text of the letter see pages 14-17 of Morton's Smith's *Secret Gospel*. The letter answers some charges made by an agnostic group called the Carpocrations who had a different version of the Gospel of Mark which included lewd materials used to justify their sexual immorality.

Clement says he has a secret, longer version of Mark himself not including the lewd material which the Carpocrations stole and corrupted for their libertine group. Smith sides with the Carpocrations and claimed that Jesus really is a libertine Gnostic magician and that this explains his miracles, his personal claims to deity, his secrecy, and statements about the law: namely, that men are not responsible to the law in any way.

If this is a fraud, this is not a clumsy fraud. Clement was interested in these topics. The letter resembles Clement's style. If it is forgery, the writer knew at

least as much as Morton Smith, which is an interesting clue. That has led to the suggestion that Morton Smith, in fact, invented all of this and made sure that the manuscript did not survive to have its ink examined or anything of that sort.

You might say nobody would do things like this, would they? Well, we have a verified case in relation to Mormonism. I'm not thinking of Joseph Smith back in the 1840's, though I think that probably is that, but a recent guy if you do a Google search on recent Mormon fraud, fraudulent Mormon manuscript, you can see some material in that direction.

We will take a fairly quick look at the Jesus Seminar that has made a lot of public splash in the last ten or fifteen years. The Jesus Seminar is a group of radical New Testament researchers who have been meeting for twenty years or so to produce a scholarly presentation on Jesus that in their view will blow traditional Christianity out of the water. They have been given extensive public media; extensive media publicity every time they meet which while it was going on about every six months.

In 1993 they presented their first book length production. This was the book edited by Robert Funk, Roy Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar called *The Five Gospels the Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*, (New York, Macmillan, 1993). I want to give you a little sketch on where they are coming from and the results they obtained. Then that will close our discussion here of liberal lives of Christ if you like.

In the early part of their book, pages two through five, they give the Seven Pillars of Scholarly Wisdom that these beliefs, or teachings, on which their whole thing rests. The first one is the Jesus of History vs. the Christ of Faith. Big difference between the Christ people believe in and the Jesus of History. The second one is the Jesus of Synoptic vs. the Jesus of John. They are claiming to opt for the Jesus of History and the Jesus of Synoptics. The third claim is the Priority

of Mark: that the Gospel of Mark was written first. Fourth is the existence of Q. We will come back and discuss this with the Synoptic Problem, but it's [Q] alleged document that contains teachings and partly sayings of Jesus, and that it was used by Mathew and Luke along with Mark. So Mark and Q were combined together in slightly different ways by Mathew and Luke to make their Gospels.

The fifth pillar, if you like, is the Eschatological vs. the Non-Eschatological Jesus. Which is the real Jesus?

Two others: Six, Oral Culture vs. Print Culture: so they are going to make a big deal of oral transmission of the Gospel material before it is written down. We will discuss that in our discussion of form criticism.

Then number seven: a skeptical principle, the Gospels are assumed non-historical unless proved otherwise. Well, we don't have time machines, OK, but that's a somewhat strange way to approach historical documents if we do that. In general, you usually don't know anything about history. But it has a great deal to do with what we mentioned earlier: the rejection of the miraculous. And if the miraculous cannot occur, then the Gospels can't very well be reliable.

They [Jesus Seminar] then give a whole bunch of rules of written evidence and rules of oral evidence, and I'll read them for you; but we will not discuss them anywhere here. Rules of written evidence—clustering and contexting: the Evangelists frequently group things in parables and clusters that did not originate with Jesus, so the idea [is] that they have reshuffled this material. Second, the Evangelists frequently relocate sayings and parables or invent new narrative context for them. Then the revision and commentary, [which is] number three. Evangelists frequently expand sayings or parables or provide them with an interpretive overlay or comment.

Fourth, the Evangelists often revise or edit sayings to make them conform to their own individual language, style or viewpoint. False Attribution is number

five: words borrowed from the fund of common lore or the Greek scriptures are often put on the lips of Jesus. Sixth, the Evangelists frequently attribute their own statements to Jesus, [like] difficult sayings. Seventh, hard saying are frequently softened in the process of transmissions to adapt them to the conditions of daily living. Eighth, variations and difficult sayings often betray the struggle of the early Christian community to interpret or adapt sayings to its own situation.

And then four of them: Christianizing Jesus. Ninth, sayings or parables expressed in Christian language are the creation of the Evangelists or their Christian predecessors; you remember the Jewish-Christian situation with the sayings of Jesus. Tenth, sayings or parables that contrast with the language or viewpoint of the Gospel in which they are imbedded reflect older tradition, but not necessarily traditions that originate with Jesus. Eleventh, the Christian community develops apologetic statements to defend the claims and sometimes attributes such statements to Jesus. Twelfth, sayings and narratives that reflect knowledge of events that took place after Jesus' death are creations Evangelist or oral tradition before them, no fulfilled prophecy is really what we are getting there.

### **Rules of Oral Evidence from the Gospels to Jesus**

1. Only sayings and parables that can be traced back to the oral period, 30-50 C.E., can possibly have originated with Jesus.
2. Sayings and parables that are tested in two or more independent sources are older than the sources in which they are imbedded.
3. Sayings or parables that are tested in two different contexts probably circulated independently at an earlier time.
4. The same, or similar, content attested in two or more different forms has had a life of its own and, therefore, may stem from an old tradition.

5. Unwritten tradition that is captured by the written gospels, relatively late may preserve very old tradition.

### Orality and Memory

6. The oral memory best retained sayings and anecdotes that are short, provocative, memorable, and often repeated.

7. The most frequently recorded words of Jesus in the surviving gospels take the form of aphorisms and parables.

8. The earliest layer of gospel tradition is made up of simple aphorisms and parables that circulated by word of mouth prior to the written gospels.

9. Jesus' disciples remembered the core, or gist, of the sayings of the parables, not his precise words, except in rare cases. They did a big section on the Storyteller's license.

10. To express what Jesus imagined, [or] is imagined to have said on particular occasions, Jesus says to them, "Let's cross to the other side."

11. To sum up the message of Jesus to Mark, as Mark understands it, the time is up; God's imperial rule is closing in. Change your ways and put your trust in the Good News. To forecast the outcome of his own gospel story, and to sum up the gospel then being proclaimed in his community, Mark has Jesus say, "The son of Adam is being turned over to his enemies, and they will end up killing him, and three days after he is killed he will rise."

13. To express Mark's own view of the disciples and others, Mark has Jesus say to the frightened disciples after the squall has died down, "Why are you so cowardly? You still don't trust, do you?"

14. Since Mark links trust with the cure of the sick, he has Jesus say to a woman he has just cured, "Daughter, your trust has just cured you." Jesus' remark is understood by Mark's narrative aside, "He was unable to perform a single miracle there, except that he did cure a few by laying hands on them," though he was always shocked by the lack of trust.

To justify the later practice of fasting, in spite of the fact that Jesus and his first disciples did not fast, the days will come when the groom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day. To elicit the right confession, Mark has Jesus ask, “What are the people saying about me?” A little later in the conversation, he asks, “What about you? Who do you say I am?” And then Peter responds, “You are the Anointed,” which is what Christians are supposed to say.

Distinctive discourse: Jesus’ characteristic talk was distinctive; it can usually be distinguished from common lore; otherwise, it is futile to search for the authentic words of Jesus.

18. Jesus’ parables and sayings cut against the social and religious grain.
19. Jesus’ sayings and parables surprise and shock; they characteristically call for reversal roles, or frustrate ordinary, everyday expectations.
20. Jesus’ sayings and parables are often characterized by exaggeration, humor and paradox.
21. Jesus’ images are concrete and vivid; his sayings and parables customarily metaphorical, and without explicit application.
22. Then that laconic sage--the sage of few words. Jesus does not, as a rule, initiate dialogue or debate, nor does he offer to cure people.
23. Jesus rarely makes pronouncements or speaks about himself in the first person.
24. Jesus makes no claim to be the anointed Messiah.

Well that’s some of the approaches that you see in the Jesus Seminar. A little about the results: in the book *The Five Gospels*, the words of Jesus are printed in colors. And they use red for: Jesus undoubtedly said this or something very like it; pink: Jesus probably said something like this; gray: Jesus did not say this, but the idea originated, [or what] it contained, are close to his own; and black: Jesus did not say this; it represents the perspective, or content, of a later, or a different, tradition.

Well, results: An index of red- and pink-letter sayings list the sayings scoring in the pink or red on this thing. I have a little discussion here of how they

do the scoring. They basically took marbles, and each of them had a red, pink, gray, and black marble, and they passed a basket around, and you put in the one for the particular saying they were voting on. So, an index of red or pink sayings lists the 90 sayings that scored in the red or pink, if you like, with detailed votes on their various versions in the different gospels; this is page 549-553 in *The Five Gospels*. According to Mark on page five, 82% of the words ascribed to Jesus in the Gospels were actually not spoken by him; [they are] black or gray if you like. So only 18% of the words spoken by Jesus in the Gospels are admitted to be his according the Jesus Seminar. In Mark, only one saying is viewed as authentic red. What's that? "Pay to the emperor what belongs to the emperor, and to God what belongs to God." Not many even come into the pink. In John, only one saying even makes it pink, "A prophet gets no respect in his own, on his own turf," John 4:44. These are their own translations, so they have kind of a racy, Brooklyn sound to them or something. The gospel of Thomas is rated ahead of John, ahead of both of these, both John and Mark, with several reds and a fair bit of pink, about comparable to Matthew and Luke.

Well, response. The best book that I've seen so far in response to the work of the Jesus Seminar is Michael Wilkin's and J.P Mooreland *Jesus under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus*. For some specific responses to liberal lies, in general, some of these before the Jesus Seminar, etc., see Craig Blomberg's excellent work, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, published by InterVarsity in '87. Gregory Boyd, *Cynic, Sage, or Son of God: Recovering the Real Jesus in an Age of Revisionist Replies*, 1995, Bridgepoint. William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth, and Apologetics*, Crossway Books, 1994. Josh McDowell, joined by an associate Bill Wilson, does, what you might say, a sequel to his earlier book, and this new book is *He Walked Among us: Evidence for a Historical Jesus, Here's Life*, 1988. And Robert B. Strimple, *The Modern Search for the Real Jesus: an Introductory Survey to the Historical Roots of Gospel Criticism*, Presbyterian & Reformed, 1995. So that's a suggestion there.

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## **Dr. Robert Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Lecture 1B**

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### **Introduction to Miracles**

#### **Review**

In our last session we were discussing the various liberal lives of Christ. We want to now do a summary on some of the principles we can learn about that and some responses to it. So, a summary on the liberal lives of Christ: I think we can say, first of all, the guiding principle of liberal reconstructions is the rejection of miraculous. This is not a necessary principle to such reconstruction, but it is currently standard. One could use, for instance, spiritism, where you get Jesus studying under a Tibetan guru or something of that sort; but modern scholarship, at least, still considers this trash at present. So, whether that will continue or not, I don't know.

#### **Liberal Treatment of Fulfilled Prophecy**

Well, if the miraculous doesn't occur or is rejected then, then fulfilled prophecy is dismissed as one of the following sorts of things: a later invention. It's obviously easy to make very impressive prophecies if you're writing after the events, and then pretending they occurred earlier. We see some of that in the Book of Mormon, I believe, where we have rather impressive predictions of Columbus, and the Indians, and the Puritans and that sort of thing, but no evidence the book was written before 1830.

Intentional fulfillment, where a person can say, "I'm going to the store tomorrow." Then they go to the store tomorrow. Yeah, it's a fulfilled prediction but not terribly impressive. Some would take Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey in that particular category, and there's some sense in which that is ok, but the problem is: can you explain all that sort of thing that way? The prophecy was vague, ok? That can be resorted to.

The fulfillment is misinterpreted, and that's kind of a standard phenomenon

today. So, probably the two commonest ones you will see in liberal circles today is, “The fulfillment was invented later,” or “The fulfillment is just a misinterpretation of something that really he didn’t intend that at all.”

### **Liberal Treatment of Miracles**

Well, miracle accounts then are going to be handled somewhat similarly. What corresponds to later invention, if you like, in explaining away fulfilled prophecies would be that these events didn’t actually happen. Somebody wrote these miracles into a story of Jesus long after, and nothing of the sort happened. It was “staged.” We’ve already seen in looking through some of the liberal lives of Christ reference to staged miracles, which we’d call “fraud,” of some sort. “Misinterpreted natural event” is, in fact, the way Paulus was handling the things: Jesus walking up the hill into the clouds; or the embarrassed people sharing their 2,500 lunches with the other 2,500 people, or something of that sort. Then the last one under miracle accounts, he says “faith healing.” We saw again in the liberal lives of Christ how that was rather common. So this is kind of the guiding principle: the rejection of the miraculous.

### **Resulting Attitude toward the Biblical Material**

What’s the resulting attitude? The resulting attitude towards the biblical material is progressive skepticism. So first you see them rejecting the theological explanations such as we see in Paul and Peter and John’s epistles, and then in the Gospel of John, etc., and then gradually getting into seeing all these miracles and having to explain them away. But even when you’ve gotten down to Mark, you’ve still got miracles. We’ll see when we discuss Bultmann’s “Form Criticism,” which is near the end of our course here, that he finally, after reducing miracles to their simplest form, has to throw them out as not having occurred because he doesn’t believe in the miraculous.

However, as we had mentioned earlier, Renan had pointed out the kind of

enigma that you see with the miracles taken to Jesus, so that he then began to sort the various characteristics of Jesus into the ethical teacher of righteousness, revolutionary, and the martyr, etc. The resulting picture of Jesus is a historical enigma if the miracles are removed.

If Jesus never existed, like we would think of, say, Paul Bunyan or somebody like that, and as the communists often claimed of Jesus, then the question is: “Where did all the historical evidence come from? How did it pop up in four or five different sources and that sort of thing? If he existed but he’s only a fraud, where did the ethical teaching come from?” That’s going to be the question. After all, you’ve got some very impressive ethical teaching in the Gospels that has engaged philosophers, ethicists, and theologians for many, many centuries. If Jesus was only a gentle teacher of righteousness, why did he receive all the opposition, particularly from the particular sources, if the Pharisees were really interested in right living, if you like. You can understand maybe more from the Sadducees, or something of that sort. So, why did he receive all the opposition, particularly from those sources? If Jesus was only a revolutionary, where did all the non-revolutionary teaching come from? How can the moral teaching of Jesus be reconciled with his messianic claims apart from the biblical explanation? This is C.S. Lewis’ trilemma: Jesus was either a lunatic, liar, or Lord. How do you handle that sort of thing?

If Jesus is not supernatural, then we must leave out one part of the data to construct a consistent personality model for the human-only Jesus. You’re seeing even the post-Bultmannians are coming across that kind of problem. Why does he seem to be humble and submitted and yet feel he is unique, and that sort of thing?

### **On Throwing out Data about Jesus**

Whenever you claim that some aspect of this data has to be thrown out you really have to explain how it got there and how it got there early. How did that happen? That’s one of the complications regarding the deity of Jesus. As J.

Gresham Machen pointed out early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the picture of Jesus as being more than human shows up in the most Jewish parts of the gospels; how did it get there? Well, this usually requires us to insert some kind of a secret plot theory into Jesus' life; or you have to insert some kind of unknown genius into early Christianity, and it presumes that the gospels are basically unreliable.

But, if Jesus is the God-man-Messiah who has also come to demonstrate what sin is and point it out to people, then Jesus' multi-facet personality and actions make sense, and the gospels are reliable. Craig Blomberg, remember the book I mentioned earlier, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, shows that if it's not assumed in advance that miracles can't occur, then the gospels look very impressive indeed. I think that's well worth reading that over.

So that really brings us back to the questions: "Is it really true that miracles cannot occur?" or, "Are the arguments against the miraculous valid?" Well, that's the primary issue then into some sense to which the New Testament historicity reduces. If miracles can occur, then the New Testament gives every evidence that it is of reliable history. If miracles cannot happen, then the New Testament is unreliable, and the liberals may be justified in leaving out whatever New Testament data do not fit it.

### **Arguments against the Miraculous**

#### **Deductive Argument**

Well, let's look at some arguments against the miraculous. I'm going to start out with a deductive argument first of all. I have not seen this one in print formally, but it does seem to color liberal arguments. It takes this form: "A miracle is a violation of natural law." Well, what does it mean to "violate natural law"? Well, it might mean to commit a sin, or commit a logical fallacy, or to commit an aesthetic blunder, and God cannot commit fallacies. He's not going to sin. He's not going to blunder aesthetically. Therefore, God cannot do miracles. You kind of have this implied often. Note this argument doesn't work for satanic miracles. Satan can sin, can blunder aesthetically, etc.

Well, the logical structure of this argument is sound. We have to examine each proposition. Is a miracle necessarily a violation of natural law? Well, that's a good question. Here I have a pen and it is sitting here on my paper. The natural law is that gravity is holding the pen down, and the electromagnetic forces that make up solids are keeping the thing from going through the paper and the desk and the table. So it stays right there. But low and behold, the pen rises from the table. What has happened? I haven't violated natural laws. I have intervened and caused something to happen that wouldn't have happened otherwise. So lifting a pen like that is not a violation of the law of gravity.

It is true, however, that "the miracle is the violation of natural law" has been used by Christians as common definition of miracle, so I'm not going to fault that too badly. But my read would be some miracles intervene in natural laws and bring another force into play if you like. Some of them, like creating the universe, seem not to violate but at least override or supersede it or something. There is, of course, an ambiguity in the term "law" when the deductive argument claims it to violate natural laws is a sin. Sin, in fact, is a moral law, not natural law; and fallacy applies to logical law, not a natural laws; and a blunder applies aesthetic laws, if you like. But are we justified in mixing moral precepts with physical constraints? Does breaking a physical law necessarily imply moral sin has occurred, or any of these others?

Perhaps physical law does not fall into any of these categories, and to violate physical law is to commit a miracle. Okay? And it's not clear that's a real problem. So it's an ambiguity of natural law, if you like, in the second statement. Even if we grant the first statement "violation of natural law" and even say "to violate natural law is to sin" if you like, or something like that, it's clear that the Bible contains moral laws which are only intended for man, and God can "violate" them some sense.

So humans are not to take vengeance. God says, “Vengeance is mine.” He can take it, right? God can, in some sense, kill humans in various circumstances that if we were to do, that would be wrong for us to do that. Those really say that there are certain sins that relate to us arrogating what God has restricted to himself. Remember even in the situation when Uzziah goes into the temple to offer incense, which the priests could offer but the king was not supposed to offer. So laws can often take that kind of form if you like.

So God can command us to worship him because of who he is, but we should not command people to worship us. Thus the Bible has precedence for what we may call “person dependent” laws. Some violations for us might not be a violation for God, as that law does not apply to him. It’s dangerous to limit or judge God by our standards.

So the deductive argument is not conclusive, especially if miracles are connected with God as one of his attributes. Since we cannot safely explore the supernatural on our own, arguing with revelation about it basically leaves us in the dark.

Sometimes people argue that the biblical picture of God is inferior because it pictures of God needing to tinker with the universe. If God was really great, he would’ve made natural laws better so he would not need to interfere with them. Well, as I already hinted earlier in my previous lecture, this assumes that God desired to create a universe which was fully automatic. Perhaps he desired to create the universe which allowed for his self-expression. Contrast a clock with a guitar? Okay, that’s the deductive argument.

### **Inductive Argument against Miracles**

Let’s try inductive argument. A very famous inductive argument was proposed by David Hume. His is the most famous and most influential. Here is how it goes:

1) When someone tells someone of an event, we tend to accept the report, or be skeptical of it, in proportion to the degree of unusual. 2) By definition, a

miracle is [a] very rare and unusual event. Our uniform experience dictates against the miraculous. Thus, we should be very skeptical of any reports about miracles.

3) The means by which we know something is our experience to the world. Since miracles go against this and upset our uniform experience, we tend to explain them by some naturalistic means unless that explanation would itself be more unusual than accepting a miracle. That's some of Hume's argument if you like. Then he shifts from his argument to a program. 4) Thus when a miracle is reported, we should reject it unless any naturalistic explanation would be even more unusual.

Well, let's analyze that. The first one: someone must tell us the event [and] we tend to accept it or reject it proportionally to the degree that it is unusual. That's certainly true. Our skepticism does increase as one claims to have seen or met X yesterday as X sifts from, say, one of the teachers in your school to the President of United States, or to Queen Elizabeth, or something like that; or Martin Luther, someone who is dead, or Jesus. Okay? It's more skeptical when you hear these more unusual reports.

2A) By definition, a miracle is a very rare and unusual event. That's correct. Okay? The Bible says that miracles are very rare events. We should tend to be skeptical of reports of them. 2B) Our uniform experience dictates against miraculous is incorrect. Hume has shifted the definition of miracle from a rare event to an impossible event. His conclusion is thus the result of a circular argument. After all, whose uniform experience is Hume considering? There are people who have claimed to have seen miracles, Okay? Over what time period? How many individuals is he including? To try to use uniform experience of all humanity would not work; as some people report they have seen miracles. This is true even in modern times. We have non-sympathetic reports of cult miracles in the literature. Take Fatima. Take spontaneous human combustion. Look that one up on Google if you are interested in what that's all about.

The more general problem is: if we assume that miracles do occur, this

methodology tells us to explain them away anyhow. Thus, the argument must be inadequate since it does not include a method to test their possible occurrence.

C.S. Lewis responds to uniform experience argument in his book *Miracles*, in my edition pages 122 to 124. John Warwick Montgomery discusses it in his book *Christianity for the Tough Minded*, page 42. Uniform experience is a poor argument as there may be a whole realm of reality which we cannot sense and which must be revealed to us through revelation, as a deaf or blind person must depend on the revelation [of others] for the sense they lack. So that is Hume's argument against miraculous.

### **Harnack's Argument**

Let's move to another one of these arguments, and that's Adolf Harnack's argument in *What is Christianity?*, the Harper Torchback edition, pages 24 and 25. He says: "We do not need to accept miracles because they're based on primitive ignorance." And here's how the argument goes: In New Testament times, miracles were thought to be commonplace. Andrew Dickson White and his book *The History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* argues this sort of thing at great length. The problem is the reactions of people in New Testament accounts show they did not expect miraculous interventions nor that they were ho-hum events. When Jesus begins doing miracles, huge crowds begin to flock, okay? Would they flock to him if those were every day events and that they had seen one every day of their life?

The disciples do not typically expect Jesus to work a miracle to get them out of a jam: feeding the 5,000, the unexpected storm at sea. They want him to do something—I'm not sure what they want him to do—but they are surely amazed when what he did do happened. New Testament people always marvel when these miracles occur, and they have trouble drawing simple lessons from them. This implies that they did not view them as common, or even as expected.

Harnack argues from reports of secular literature that the miracle accounts were common in the New Testament period. These are not as well attested, nor as clear, as the New Testament accounts. But we should not rule out some of these, as the Bible itself allows for miracles by satanic power. There were remarks about the accounts in Exodus about the magicians trying to match Moses, and they begin to draw some strong conclusions when they can't match the match if you will. So we must be careful in deciding what can and cannot occur on the basis of our preconceptions. An example of that: late 18<sup>th</sup> century scientists in France and in America, including Thomas Jefferson, refused to believe that stones fell from the sky because only peasants and priests reported seeing them. But it eventually turned out that stones do fall from the sky; they're called "meteors," okay? We have lots of them in our museums now.

The second point that Harnack made was New Testament people did not know enough science to recognize a miracle when they saw one (page 25). Well, this appeal to our pride in high technology, much of our advancing technology, does look miraculous to primitives. You have your radio, telephone, computer etc. There are a lot of et ceteras since I've made these lectures. However, can we now explain Jesus's miracles by the means of high technology? Walking on the water, was he really riding on a hovercraft and they missed noticing the craft and all the racket it made? So we at least don't have any technology to explain how that sort of thing [walking on water] happened.

New Testament people knew which diseases would not heal suddenly: blindness, death, leprosy, crippled limbs, etc. People today still cannot explain these methods and these miracles with technology. Consider Mark 6, walking on water. Mark 7, the deaf and mute healed. Mark 8, the feeding of the 4,000. It's impressive just that Jesus did these types of miracles which still stump us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. So there are some real problems with arguments against the miraculous.

### **What does the miraculous do to science?**

What does the acceptance of the miraculous do to scientific history, or to science in general? Many historians and scientists are scared of a miracle because they think that then the whole bottom drops out of their work, as their job is to explain reality. This would introduce a whole new realm. Scientific historians feel there should be no miraculous interventions needed to explain history. Well, adding miracles does add a new dimension to reality for many people. I'm not sure I've experienced any miracles. I've had some fairly wonderful answers to prayer, but I'm not sure that I've seen anything that I would explicitly claim as a miracle. History has thus been "explained," if you might [put] quotes around it, with miracles, but we don't know whether the explanations are true since we cannot check them; we do not have time machines.

What difference does adding miracles make to explaining history? Well, first it makes an enormous difference on the scale of ultimate explanation. If there's a God who intervenes, then history is certainly going to be affected on a large scale. God and other supernatural beings introduce the possibility of new purposes and new goals in history which we might not otherwise know about or be able to figure out from down here inside history. What difference miracles make on a small scale will depend on the actual frequency of miracles at that particular time and place.

It may be that there are points in history when miracles were happening but they were not important historically. I would suggest from biblical warrant that regeneration is miraculous and it does affect history. But it's not the sort of thing like multiplying the loaves and the fishes, or opening the Red Sea, or something of that sort. There may be points in history where miracles are extremely important for understanding the events.

Miracles, of course, do add another variable for use in constructing models, but it doesn't follow that this variable must be invoked at every gap any more than any other mode of explanation must be invoked at any other gap. There are already plenty of difficult factors to assess—variables in understanding history: individual personalities, backgrounds, motivations, economics, etc. We can't get inside a person to see their motivations. We know motivations exist because we're inside ourselves, but we can't see the others. We don't have to invoke a miracle whenever an event occurs which we cannot explain. I have a PowerPoint talk on the miraculous; I don't remember the title of it right at the moment, which [i.e., the talk] does suggest somewhat, you might say, [are] principles [for] recognizing miracles, and that sort of thing.

Well I'll say a word about it since we're here, okay; I can't reproduce the whole talk. I look at the biblical terms used for miracles, and since my Hebrew's not that great, I'm primarily looking at the Greek terms for miracles. You have *dunamis*, which means "power." So a miracle is a work involving unusual power of some sort. While that might not be the physical term for energy per unit of time, but "power" okay.

Then there's the two terms *thalma* and *teros*, which speak of a miracle as something wonderful, amazing, marvelous; that sort of thing. So we think of miracle as something marvelous. And then there's the third term *semeion*, which speaks of miracle as significant. And so suggestions should be that probably our default is we don't invoke miracles under normal circumstances, but if we see evidence an event that is sufficiently powerful, marvelous, and even significant in some way, that may suggest that a miracle is the best explanation of that particular event.

Liberals have often argued that the miraculous is irrational, if you like; but from a biblical perspective, the miraculous is not irrational because it's the action of a rational being. In God's case, he's the most rational being, and it's [the

miracle] usually accompanied by revelation. Some people, as I say, object that miracles add an irrational element to history. By this they mean it adds an element [in] which they can't predict what it will do. That does destroy the historian's dream of being able to predict the future. But the Christian realizes that something irrational is not being added—that a mind is involved: God's mind is not irrational.

Through revelation, God explains what he is doing in his miracles, before and after the event. Satan, of course, may or may not tell us what he is doing, and he is not trustworthy in any case, and sin and sinful minds are irrational. Okay? But God is not. So satanic miracles may be irrational, but in dealing with the motivation of sinful humans, we already have plenty of the irrational in history. Without even imagining miracles, you have got plenty of irrational things happening in history. In fact, the miraculous itself is the revelation of the unseen supernatural person named God when he is the miracle worker, just as human activity is a revelation of the unseen inner person.

Note the parallel activities of God and man: We can look at the outside of other people, and we see what they are doing; but we have to infer their motives, and we may be wrong. We can look at history and see what's going on, and we can try to infer God's motives, and we may be wrong. Okay? The Book of Job is a very powerful picture of this, as God and Satan are acting in the unseen world, and Job and his friends are observing what's happening out there, and all of them botch it up because they don't see what's going on.

### **Miraculous solves problems**

The miraculous certainly solves a lot of problems in biblical history as well as in natural prehistory. Liberals, as we seen, have not been able to make sense of Jesus without miracles; but with miracles Jesus and the rest of Scripture make

sense. It makes sense in how the disciples came to believe in the Resurrection; it actually happened. If it actually happened, it's not so hard to see how they believe it, okay? They weren't making guesses about an empty tomb; they were witnessing Jesus. It explains where the elaborate ritual, moral, and legal code of the Pentateuch came from. Liberals have to spread this over a thousand years and still have some troubles there. It makes sense of fulfilled prophecies, especially the coming of Jesus. Also natural history is—excuse me—natural prehistory is explained: the origin of life, origin of earth, origin of the universe, etc.

### **Liberal Reconstructions of the Life of Jesus: Analysis**

This brings us to one last category we want to talk about here just a bit, and that is: What are we to make of liberal reconstructions of the life of Jesus? Well, this may sound very gauche, but there's Satan's work. C.S. Lewis captures this very nicely in his *Screwtape Letters*. I have a Macmillan paperback, and that's page 105 to 109; and then the old hardback edition one is [pages] 116 to 118. [It] is the chapter there in *Screwtape*.

Screwtape, if you have read the book and you remember, there is a senior devil and he is writing to his nephew. Not sure how these relations work out in the demonic realm. Wormwood and Screwtape decide how to keep people distracted from the real Jesus. He says, "Have them search for the historical Jesus, and have them write a new life of Jesus every year." That's been going on before Lewis wrote the book, and it's been going on since Lewis wrote the book. "Such work," says Screwtape, "is called brilliant in those very circles." You can see that in some of the hype over the Gospel of Judas and the Da Vinci Code and the tomb of Jesus, and all these things have come up in recent years etc., such work is called brilliant in literary circles but is based on the type of guesswork which would be ruinous in business, betting on horses, and things of that sort. This distraction from the real Jesus is a modern form of idolatry since they make up their own Jesus.

You might ask, “Why does God permit this?” Deuteronomy 13, verses 1 through 5, discusses why the Lord would allow false prophets to arise. Parallel in that culture, if you like, to liberals arising with new Jesuses in this culture. He says, and it’s the Lord speaking through Moses, that this is a test for people to see whether they love the Lord God who exists in comparison of the gods with human invention who often look more attractive or more tolerant of their sin. The world and its history is a testing ground to demonstrate to humans that we are as bad as God says we are and that only his mercy can save us.

There is a nice discussion of the reality of miracles from an Evangelical perspective is given in the book by Doug Geivett and Gary Habermas, *In Defense of Miracles: A Comprehensive Case of God’s Action in History*, InterVarsity, 1997.

### **Summary / Conclusion**

Well, with that we end our first unit here, which is the historical Jesus. We don’t have time machines to throw away the Gospel, throw away our three, [I mean] four primary sources about the material. We will look at some material inside the Gospels, obviously, and the Synoptic Gospels further on in our course here. There’s lot of apologetic material out there. Naturally, I tend to recommend our stuff in the IBRI website, [www.ibri.org](http://www.ibri.org), where we try and deal with the evidence in nature for the existence of God and then try and look at historical reliability. But there’s good material out there, but there is bad material out there as well. We’re going to try at least to give you some warnings regarding, at first, the bad, and then some encouragement regarding the good. Thank you very much.

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**Dr. Robert C. Newman, Synoptic Gospels,  
Intertestamental Backgrounds**

Lecture 2

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**Introduction**

Good afternoon. We're continuing a twelve-part series course on the Synoptic Gospels. In our first sessions, which we might call unit one, we looked at the historical Jesus, and it was basically a tour of a very quick sketch of some non-Christian views of Jesus and then of some claimed historical views of Jesus, which basically fill in the category of theological liberalism of one sort or another. Then at the end point where that was headed, we looked a little bit at the arguments used for such a position against the miraculous and tried to respond to those. We now move on to the second unit—which is rather different and also relevant to the whole matter of the Synoptic Gospels—and that's looking at the Jewish background of the New Testament.

**Sources on the Inter-Testament Period**

To understand the New Testament, especially the Gospels, it's helpful to know a good deal about the Old Testament, but it is also helpful to know something of what went on during the four centuries that separate the end of the Old Testament narrative from the beginning of the New Testament narrative. It is this later that we wish to look at here, called in Christian circles, "the Inter-Testament Period," but understandably in Jewish circles it is not called the Inter-Testament Period; they typically call it "the Second Temple Period."

So we want to think a little bit first about what information we have about the Inter-Testament Period. We have first of all some predictive passages in the

Old Testament, and I'm going to come back in just a couple of minutes and take a look at Daniel's overlook of the period sketched in terms of the image of Daniel that Daniel sees in Daniel 2 and Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the wild beasts in Daniel chapter 7, I believe that is.

### **The Apocrypha**

Besides that, we have some religious writing of the Jews, mostly during the Inter-Testament Period that we call the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. These have been accepted by some Christian churches as a part of the Bible. Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches accept the material called the Old Testament Apocrypha, and some of the smaller regional churches, Ethiopic churches and such, have accepted some of the other material that we now call the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. So religious writings of the Jews mostly during the Inter-Testament Period, though we don't believe they are inspired writings, they do give us some insight into the culture, the religious ideas, some of the sects, and some of the biblical interpretation of the period, and so it would be helpful in that direction.

### **Philo and Josephus**

Besides that, we have two individual writers that we know by name and approximate dates that give us information on this period, and that is Philo of Alexandria, born perhaps around 20 BC and lived past 40 AD. He was a Jewish person living in the large Greek city, living in the northern delta of the Nile, called Alexandria. This particular Jew would be what we would call a Hellenistic Jew who had adopted a great deal of the Greek culture. He had studied Greek philosophy, and yet he was trying to be faithful to the Bible as well. So he tried to combine the Old Testament with selected ideas from Greek philosophy. We see some partial accommodation to Hellenism there in his position. He speaks to a people that accommodate it far more strongly than he did. He had a tendency to

allegorize a lot of the laws, but he still thought you should obey them; whereas there were other Hellenistic Jews who thought having allegorized the laws, you do not need to obey them literally. So he would be a moderate Hellenist, if you like.

Moving north from him up to the Jerusalem we have the individual Josephus, often known as Flavius Josephus; that's his Latin name. He was born in 37 AD, and lived to sometime after 100 AD. He would have been less Hellenized. He was a Jew involved on both sides of the Jewish war of 66 to 73 AD: the revolt against Rome, which had rather disastrous consequences. He started out on the Jewish side, although he had visited Rome before that time and perhaps did not feel too optimistic about the chances [of] the Jews against Rome, but when he as a general for the defense of Galilee was surrounded in the city of Jotapata by the Roman army, he and some others hid and drew straws for who would kill who. They were going to commit suicide, and somehow Josephus wound up with the best, or next to the best, straw and convinced the other guy who was still alive at that point that they should give themselves up to the Romans. When they did that, Josephus said, "I have a message from God for the Roman general Vespasian." When Vespasian heard him, Josephus said, "God has told me that you are going to be the emperor of Rome." Well, Vespasian kept Josephus alive to see whether that would turn out to be true or not, and perhaps he was influenced by Josephus' prediction as well. Lo and behold, he did end up being the emperor in the course of the next 2 or 3 years. So Josephus who had become a slave and being captured and could have been put to death, and would have been put to death otherwise, was now made a freedman and released. In the course of about 10 years after that, he accommodated his patron Vespasian by writing a history of the Jewish war, so writing about 80 something AD, he wrote *The Jewish War*, and then about 25 years after that, he wrote a work called *Antiquities the Jews*.

Josephus' *Jewish War* starts about the time of Alexander and comes up to the end of the Jewish war. *The Antiquities* goes all the way back to Genesis with

some additions here and there and comes up to the outbreak of the Jewish war. So these are two very important writings, both covering the Inter-Testament Period.

### **The Dead Sea Scrolls and Rabbinic Writings**

Besides the predictive passages in the Old Testament, the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, Philo and Josephus, we also have the very famous Dead Sea Scrolls, which is literature written or copied by a sect that had headquarters, at least an encampment if you like, in a place we call Qumran, perhaps 20 miles southeast of Jerusalem, or something like that. We think it was probably some of the Essenes, which seemed to match in many, many ways. Of course, a great deal of what we have there is basically copies of Scripture that they had kept. Some of the earliest copies we have are the different books of the Bible in Hebrew [that] are from there, but also some of their own literature, and also some literature which may or may not have been some of their own, [and] some of the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. Both Enoch and Jubilees have been found fragmentary there in Hebrew. So their own literature at least gives us some information about that sect and how they interpreted the Bible and things of that sort.

From [a] later period, starting perhaps 200 AD and running to maybe 600 AD or so, we have the rabbinic literature, which is the writing down of what we might think of as the tradition of the rabbis, or the tradition of the Pharisees even. It is the sort of thing that Jesus speaks about, but which is probably totally all in oral form at Jesus' own ministry, but came to be written down in the earliest part. The Mishnah is from about 200 AD, and the Talmuds, one about 400 AD, one about 550 AD. Those are all compilations, if you like, of the oral tradition of the rabbis, and then some biblical translation paraphrases commentaries, etc., [called] Midrashim. So those give us some important information as well.

So those are our basic ancient sources of information on the Inter-Testament Period.

## **Daniel as an Inter-Testament Biblical Source**

### **Daniel 2**

We want to turn next to have a quick look of Daniel's overview of the period because we will use this as part of our way to structure our discussion on the Inter-Testament Period. In Daniel chapter 2, Daniel is given a vision in which he sees a strange statue: it's a statue that in verse 32 is described as having a head of gold and then it's breast and arms and upper body, if you like, in verse 32, is described as being made of silver. Its belly and sides in the same verse are described as being of bronze. Its legs of iron, verse 33, and then its feet part iron part clay, verse 33. Then the action that we see, and this after a description of the image, we have one brief action that a stone cut without hands falls down and smashes the image and then grinds it to a powder. Then the stone grows to fill the whole earth.

The image is explained in chapter 2, verses 38-45. We're told in 45 that the image and the action tell us something that will happen after Daniel's time. Then in verse 38 Nebuchadnezzar's universal rule is represented by the golden head. In verse 39 that there will be another kingdom inferior; maybe that's what is "lower down," [that] is actually the word, so it might just be a physical statement of this is further down, but the fact that you switch from gold to silver, which has universally been a cheaper metal than gold, may suggest it is inferior in some way. This suggests then that the head represents not just Nebuchadnezzar personally, but that empire, if you like.

The successor empire is represented by the silver.

A third kingdom to rule over all the earth, we're told in verse 39, is represented by the bronze.

A fourth kingdom is as strong as iron, so that's the iron legs [that] is going to be following that. Then in verses 41-43 you get a little remark about the feet. Does it suggest that it's a fifth kingdom? So apparently it's a continuation of the fourth, which would fit with the iron legs going into iron and clay feet, but not as strong. The iron is part broken; the clay, presumably, which is here presumed to be baked at this point, is not wet clay. The stone falling, smashing the rest and growing, is explained in verse 44. God will set up a permanent kingdom.

### **Daniel 7**

Rather parallel to that we have Daniel's four wild animals in Daniel chapter 7. Here this is actually a dream that Daniel had; the other one, which I didn't mention, was a dream that actually Nebuchadnezzar had had. Here a group of animals are pictured in chapter 7, verses 3-14, and then a few more details are scattered through the explanation in verses 19, 20, 21, 23. We're told first of all that there will be diverse beasts that will arise from the sea in verse 3. The first of these is a lion with eagle's wings, but then the eagle's wings are plucked; and the animal is lifted up, presumably on its hind feet and is given a human heart (verse 4). Then the second beast is a bear. It's raised up on one side; and since we're not there to see it, we don't know exactly what that looks like. Perhaps it was tilted like that or something. It's gnawing on three ribs which are in its mouth. Then in verse 6 we're told that the third beast is a leopard, but it's a strange one as it's got four wings and it's got four heads. Then in verses 7-8, and then further in the explanation, we're told of a fourth, dreadful, terrible beast with iron teeth and bronze claws and ten horns, and then an eleventh horn comes up and wars against the saints.

In verses 9-14 we're told that the Ancient of Days comes, apparently a

picture of God, and that thrones are set up. The fourth beast is destroyed, and his dominion is given to one like the Son of Man who comes and presents himself before the Ancient of Days; and he's given an eternal universal kingdom.

In verses 17-26 the animals are explained, but very quickly. In verse 17 we're told that the four beasts represent four kings who will arise from the earth. As you go on through the discussion, it's clear that "kings" and "kingdoms" are being used interchangeably. So the fourth kingdom is pictured as diverse from the others. We're told that its horns represent kings and that the eleventh horn wears out the saints for three times--time, times, and half a time, presumably 3.5 times. Then the Son of Man receives the kingdom, etc., where it's explained that the saints will take the kingdom and possess it forever.

### **Interpretation of Daniel 2 and 7**

Well, those were the two visions, if you like, and chapters 2 and 7 in Daniel. The general interpretation over the centuries, although it's been modified some by theological liberalism in the last couple centuries, is that generally the kingdoms represented are Babylon, which operates from about 609, when the Babylonians destroy the Assyrian kingdom, down to 539, when Cyrus takes the Babylonians. He succeeds with his kingdom, which is a combined kingdom of his own kingdom, Persia, with the Medes, which he had joined with, and they rule over Israel from 539-331 BC. Then Greece, 331 BC to 30 BC; and then Rome, 30 BC to 476 AD. So in the image, the gold head represents Babylon, the silver arms and breast represent Medo-Persia, the bronze abdomen represents Greece, [and] the iron legs represent Rome.

In the vision of the beasts, the lion with the wings represents Babylon, and the idea of standing on its feet and putting the human heart in him may, in fact, connect us with the incident of Nebuchadnezzar losing his mind, becoming like a beast for a while, and then being restored.

The bear eating ribs and raised up on one side: some have suggested the raised up on one side represents that the Persian Empire, in that the Persian side of it is greater than the Median Empire side of it. I would take that to be pure speculation were it not a later vision in which we're told [this] represents Medo-Persia as the animal with a big horn on one side and a smaller horn on the other side. So the Persian side is the big horn, so I think that's probably correct then.

The leopard with the four heads is taken to be Greece. We'll see from this later description in Daniel 8, which we're not going to discuss, that the kingdom there, which we're explicitly told is Greece, is an animal with a single horn in its head which is broken and replaced by four horns. So we presume the four heads and four wings here represent this fourfold division of the kingdom when the original unified kingdom is damaged, if you like.

That presumably leaves Rome, then, to be the terrible ten-horned, actually eleven-horned (eventually) beast, and we're not going to chase that further nor at this point go into the question the liberals claim that they make the second kingdom Media, replace Greece by Persia, Rome by Greece in order to make it come out in the Maccabean period—but that's off our subject.

### **Civilizations that Dominate over Israel in the Inter-Testament Period**

What we're going to do is in our discussion now of the Inter-Testament Period we're going to divide it up into who was in control over Israel at the time of these. Babylon is already off the scene by the time we get to [the] Inter-Testament. Remember the return is pictured in Zechariah and Haggai, actually in Nehemiah, but in the prophets Zechariah and Haggai, so we'll pick up with Medo-Persia and then Palestine under the Persians, or Medo-Persians, and Palestine under Greece, and then Palestine under Rome except that there's a brief independence period from Greece to Rome under the Hasmoneans, or Maccabees.

So we're going to organize it in Palestine under the Persians, Palestine under the Greeks, Jewish independence under the Hasmoneans and Palestine under Rome. So that's the way we're going to go; so let's take a look at that.

### **Palesine under Persian Rule, 539-331 BC**

So, our next category then will be Palestine under the Persians, 539-331 B.C. What should we say? The dominance of [the] Persian Empire starts with the rise of Cyrus. Cyrus was way back in 559 BC. So this is 20 years before he manages to conquer Babylon. He inherits a small kingdom named Anshan, which basically is Persia. Then he defeats the Medes in 550, and that gets the Babylonians very concerned about that. The king at that time was Nabonidas, who had been, what should we say, giving Cyrus some money under the table to support his rebellion against the Medes and trying to weaken the Medes. Suddenly, he realizes that Cyrus, having defeated the Medes, he's now in bigger danger than the Medes were. But then Cyrus first moves northwest and takes Asia Minor in 546, and then comes back and takes Babylon in 539. So that's a very quick sketch of the rise of Cyrus. There's a lot more detail, most of which I don't now remember.

Several important things happened then with the Persians coming into the empire. First of these is the return of the Jews under Cyrus in 539 to 530 BC. Unlike the Assyrians and the Babylonians, Cyrus tries to avoid offending other religions. Unlike the Assyrians and the Babylonians, Cyrus decides to end the deportation policy. Both of those two empires had the idea that the best way to keep a subject people down was to deport their people and scatter them among people of other languages, and that way they were less likely to be able to organize a revolt. Well, Cyrus ended that and so allowed the various people to return to their territories if they wished to. So the Jews are allowed to return. You see the

sketch for it in Ezra Chapter 1, verses 2 through 4. Not a whole lot of them do, but some of them do. So now we begin to have, for the first time in about what's been not quite 70 years at this point (about 50 years at this point), Jews are returning now to where what we're calling "Palestine." I'm not trying to get into the Palestinian-Jewish debate, but basically using that as a generic term for the land and Israel, with the "Jews as a term for the people.

### **Rebuilding the Second Temple**

The second important thing that happened then under the Persians is the rebuilding of the temple, or the building of the Second Temple, in Jewish terminology. Solomon's temple was the first temple and this temple the second temple. Cyrus originally initially allowed the rebuilding to start but then stopped it due to opposition of neighbors - you see a sketch of this in Ezra 6 and in Ezra 4. But then when Cyrus died, there was an interregnum and some fighting back and forth. Eventually Darius, Darius I here, comes to power in 521 and will reign for 46 years, a long time of reign. Because the Jews had showed loyalty to Darius and his succession instead of rebelling as many of the people had, the Jews were allowed to rebuild their temple.

And so they begin to rebuild their temple starting about 520 or so. The temple was completed around 515 under the leadership of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah - you see references to that in both of those, then, under the governor Zerubbabel who was a descendant of David, and high priest Joshua who presumably descended from the high priestly line. So we have the return of the Jews, and they're back in their land now for the first time in a good many years. It's actually something like 70 years from the first deportation to the first returns, and seventy years from the destruction of the first temple to the building of the

second temple. So that's basically, I think, why the captivity is treated as 70 years long.

### **Rebuilding under Ezra and Nehemiah**

There is a third event of some significance among the Jews; actually, two events, if you like, are the revival in Judah under Ezra and the rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem under Nehemiah. These take place during the reign of Persian King Artaxerxes I. The first of these events is back around when Artaxerxes begins to reign about 465 BC. Ezra around 458 is sent from Babylon back to Jerusalem. He restores the people to observance of the law with the permission of the Persian king. Then some years later, around 445, Nehemiah, who at that point had become the king's cupbearer, so a pretty intimate officer in the royal court, if you like, was sent by the Persian king as governor to rebuild the walls. Rebuilding the walls was pretty important. We tend to think of a village as a little town and a city as a big town, but in the time before airplanes and major artillery and all that sort of thing, the difference between village and city was not so much size as it was fortification. So a village might be quite large, but if it was unfortified, it's a village. A city might be quite small, but if it was not just a fort, if it was a place where lots of people lived and it was fortified, it was a city. So, essentially, Jerusalem becomes a city again with the completion of the city walls here in 445 BC. So those are kind of the three major, or should we say, four major, events of the Persian period: allowing the Jews to return, allowing them to rebuild the city, to rebuild the temple, and then the revival in Judah and the rebuilding of the walls.

### **Rise of the Aramaic Language**

Another rather important event and we're not sure exactly when this occurs and such, since it is much vaguer, is the rise of the Aramaic language as a significant thing in Jewish history. The Aramaic language had been around for a long time before this. It was the old language of the area that has traditionally been called in English, Syria, but that's pretty confusing with Syria and Assyria. So the Hebrew word "Aram" is being picked up then in some Old Testament circles as well. In any case, it's the upper Euphrates Valley. The language had been around. You see reference to it when Laban and Jacob part: they build this pile of stones and Jacob gives it the Hebrew word for a pile that serves as a witness, which there's a technical term for it in Hebrew, called "galeed," whereas in, apparently, Aramaic there's not. So there's a phrase that is used, "Jegar Sahadutha," [Gen 31:47] or something like that, used to represent this stone of witness, if you like, this pile, this "Cairn" of witness.

Well, then after Jacob and Laban's time, that would be, what, 1800 or something like that BC, it becomes the diplomatic language of the Ancient Near East as Assyria conquers the whole of the Fertile Crescent. They basically adopt Aramaic as the trade language through that area, [and] the Babylonians continue it; the Persians continue it, et cetera. Somewhere along the line it was adopted by the Jews, and the best guess is it was during the Babylonian exile that some of the Jews were put in an area where the people around them didn't speak Hebrew and yet, and obviously a number of them spoke their own native languages, but there was this trade language available and so they learned to speak Aramaic.

In Nehemiah 8, verses 7 and 8, it appears that a lot of the returning Jews from the Babylonian exile at this point, so the sons, grandsons, great grandchildren, etc., of the people who were exiled, didn't really know Hebrew anymore. So there was some translation being given when Nehemiah reads from the law and the situation there back in Israel. When we get near the end of the Inter-Testament Period, you began to get oral translations of the Old Testament into Aramaic for the benefit of people in the synagogue services who could not

understand the Hebrew, and that stayed oral for a while. They were called “Targums,” from a verb meaning “to translate,” basically. They’re still in use at the time of Jesus, and in fact, they become one of the major languages of the Rabbinic Talmuds in 400 AD and 550 AD. So, that is the Aramaic language, and that is important, and that arose sometime around this Persian period.

### **Rise of the Synagogue**

Another feature of the Persian period, or the Babylonian into the Persian Period is the rise of the synagogue. The synagogue becomes a place of worship for those unable to attend temple, and it features prayer and Bible study, but no sacrifice; so worship, but a non-sacrificial worship. Date of the origin is obscure. The common view is it is during the Babylonian captivity because that’s when people didn’t have a temple anymore. They couldn’t go there. There’s a couple remarks in the Old Testament that suggest there were a couple of places of worship throughout the land that don’t appear to be high places, and so that may suggest that already, while Israel was still in the land before the captivity, when you were still two or three days walk from Jerusalem, you could gather at a place. If you wanted to go somewhere for worship, there might be some local place to do something like that. So it may even predate the Babylonian Exile; we don’t know. In any case, we do know that it continued alongside the Second Temple. So the Second Temple stood from 515 BC to 70 AD, and we have this synagogue existing then. One of the rabbinic passages mentions something like there were 100 synagogues in Jerusalem. Well, what’s going on there? Well, obviously local places of fellowship of some sort. We see from various remarks, including the New Testament, that some of those were synagogues of people from particular regions: Synagogue of the Freedmen or synagogue of people from Antioch, or something of that sort.

### **Inter-testament Temples**

Well, with the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD, this becomes the only place for Jewish worship and that's what it remains to this day. So the various Jewish places of worship you see scattered around the world, even though they may be called temples in some places, they are actually synagogues of one sort or another.

Well, we've got one more topic to say a word or two about under the Persian period and that is the Inter-Testament temples. The rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple takes place here, and that is called, they say among the Jews, the Second Temple, or the Second Jerusalem Temple, built 515 BC, [and] destroyed by the Romans [in] 70 AD. That was the orthodox temple in the sense, at least, that they seemed to stay with the biblical view of the nature of God and that sort of thing, and continued the Mosaic regulations in one way or another. However, somewhere along the line a temple was developed up in the area we call Samaria, and often called the Mountain Gerizim Temple because it was situated on one of the two mountains on which the Israelites had the covenant renewal ceremony every seven years. One group was to stand on one mountain, and one on another, and one shouts the blessings and the other the curses. The date of its building is uncertain, but suggestions are from 450 BC down to 330 BC, somewhere in that period. It was built by the Samaritans, but they picked up some help from some priests who were unhappy about what was happening in Jerusalem and came north, etc.

It was destroyed by the Hasmoneans, or Maccabees, 128 BC, but it's still a holy site in New Testament times. John 4:20: you can see the woman says, "Here on this mountain we worship," etc., and that was, perhaps, around 30 AD, or something of that sort; yet it was still viewed as holy then, and it's still viewed as holy today. There's a small group of Samaritans that still exist; I don't know the

current numbers. They were down to a few hundred from what I saw in the 1970's. They still have worship activities there. They actually still have Passover services there and still have sacrifices there. So they had continuing sacrifices, through the Inter-Testament Period. We're talking one sacrifice a day versus a least two a day in the Jerusalem temple.

Besides these two temples, there's a temple developed in Egypt, which is usually called the Elephantine Temple, to distinguish it from a temple farther north of Egypt. This seems to have been founded perhaps around 525 BC and last to about 390. We think we have records of this only from papyri that have survived from that period. I think it was built for the benefit of Jewish soldiers who had been hired as mercenaries or, perhaps, enslaved as mercenaries by the Persians when they conquered Egypt. So they lived down, or up, depending on whether you're thinking about a map. It is south on the map, but up the Nile River at the first cataract on the Nile--the Elephantine Temple. They lived there. They might have been some refugees from the time of Manasseh; we don't know. There were some hints that they might have been polytheistic, that they're carrying on some of the troubles that were going on. We see already in Jeremiah where Jeremiah comments that the Jews that had taken him down into Egypt were still worshipping the Queen of Heaven. So apparently it was something of the sort that was going on here.

I mention one of the temples which comes later than the Persian Period, but since we're discussing temples, we'll put it in here. That's the later Leontopolis Temple in Egypt founded in about 160 BC and then destroyed by the Romans in 72 AD. It was built in the Maccabean Period by a high priest named Onias III who had been bumped out of the priesthood by Antiochus Epiphanes; we'll talk about him later. So this fellow fled to Egypt, and a temple was built down there, probably by the Egyptian Jewish community. But after the Jewish war the Romans didn't want any places that would function as a center for rebelling against Rome,

and so they destroyed it. So that is a very quick tour of Palestine under the Persians.

### **Palestine under Greek Rule, 331-160 BC**

We turn to look at Palestine under the Greeks from about 331 BC to about 160 BC. That's the period when the Maccabees will eventually get their independence from the remains of the Greek Empire. We start with Alexander, later known as Alexander the Great, who rules from about 336 to 329 BC. He was the son of a Macedonian ruler named Philip. His father Philip was assassinated when Alexander was only 20 years old. (He was not assassinated by Alexander.) Yet Alexander at age 20 already had some experience as a general in Philip's army, and so within a couple years he was able to establish control of his father's kingdom.

One of the projects his father still had had was Philip identified himself as a Greek even though he was Macedonian; and so did Alexander. One of Philip's projects he had in mind was to avenge the Greeks against the Persians who had invaded a century and a half earlier than that. So once Alexander's got control of Macedon and Greece again, he invades Asia Minor in 334 BC with only 35,000 men. Well, that sounds like a lot of men, but when the Persians had invaded Greece a century and a half before, they had had over a million men according to the historians. So what are you going to do with 35,000 men? Well, certainly one advantage was the Persians themselves were back in their empire a 1000 miles away. They had lots of soldiers in Asia Minor, but they're all garrison troops scattered over 50 or 100 fortified areas. So it was not easy to collect them. Alexander was able to win a victory that year at the Granicus River in western Asia Minor, and that really opened Asia Minor to his taking control of the area. There were a lot of Greeks living in Asia Minor, and they weren't happy with the

Persians; and there were a lot of other people living there. The Persians were not the native people there. So Alexander was able to get a lot of support once he won this crucial battle. So then he had about a year to consolidate his control in Asia Minor and then head east.

### **Alexander's Conquering of the World**

According to Herodotus, I believe it is, the story is that he went to a place at Gordian, there was a chariot with an elaborate knot on the tang of the chariot to hook the yoke the crossbar to it, and there was a legend that whoever could untie this knot would become ruler of the world. Well, Alexander fooled around with it for a few minutes and was clearly having no success. Alexander, who was not a model of patience, whipped out his sword, wacked through the rope and said (I was wondering if he actually said this or not), “Thus I untie all Gordian knots,” or something of that sort. Well, he does come to conquer the world as understood at [that] time.

So the next battle is at Issus at the east end of Asia Minor. This time the Persians have pulled together a big army and have come over to fight him, and there’s a big battle at Issus. Alexander wins in a spectacular way, and as a result that opens Syria, Palestine, and Egypt to him. The king, the Persian king, barely escapes. His royal family actually do not escape, and they were taken captive, and he has to go all the way back to the capital of Persia to put together another army again. So Alexander’s got a couple of years, and he then comes down and takes Palestine and Egypt and such.

### **Josephus and Alexander and the Jews**

The rather interesting incident there which liberals fiercely deny, but Josephus says that really occurred, is that Alexander was not too happy with the Jews because the high priest had refused to send him troops as he was taking

northern Syria because the high priest had made a vow to the king of Persia that he would not fight against the king of Persia. So Alexander, not very happy, was headed that way, and the high priest put on his dress robes, we'll say, and had everyone pray, and he processioned the people who would have to meet Alexander. When Alexander met them, he said he had seen this man in a dream when he was back in Greece and told them he should treat him well, etc. Then, according to Josephus, Alexander was shown the prophecies in Daniel about him. That, of course, is not popular in liberal circles, as they think Daniel wasn't written for another 100s of years. But in any case, that's the story. What there isn't any speculation about is that Alexander, for some reason, treated the Jews very, very well and didn't treat the people all around them that well. So there we are.

Anyway, Alexander then finally wins after he's taken Greece, and there's this story about actually taking Egypt. There's a story about Egypt as well, that Alexander goes out to Amnun in the desert in Egypt, west of the Nile. There's an oracle there, and he receives a favorable oracle again that he will control the world. So how many of these stories are true--we don't have time machines, okay?

### **More of Alexander's Conquering Persia**

So anyway, in 331, he has now moved towards Persia's center, if you like, and there's a big battle at Gaugamela. Here Alexander's army destroys the Persian army. He destroys the Persian Empire, and the Persian king heads for cover east towards the eastern end of his empire. Alexander and his troops follow him. Eventually, just before they catch up with him, the people following the Persian king assassinate him and surrender to Alexander.

Alexander has delusions of an empire—that's probably not a bad approximation—and he decides to conquer as much land as he can. But his troops finally, when they get into what we now call India, said, "Enough." They head

back to Babylon, and Alexander dies in battle at age 33 having conquered all this territory.

Well, Alexander's agenda was to conquer as much of the world as he could, but also to mix the eastern and western cultures and to spread Greek ideas and attitudes and such all over his conquered territory, including the Greek language. That's Alexander.

### **Struggles for Succession**

Well, Alexander is dead now in 323 at age 33, and that brings us to a struggle for succession. Alexander's son is still a baby. Alexander's dead. Alexander's brother is mentally incompetent. So the generals under Alexander band together to try to keep the throne from the son, but they fall to fighting each other. While all this is going on, the brother dies and the baby dies. Once the baby was dead, then there was nothing to stop the winner-takes-all thing if that could possibly be worked out. Well, it never works out that way. There's not a sufficiently dominant winner to take everything. So eventually the empire was broken into several pieces. These are usually counted as four. Lysimachus took the area of Thrace north of Macedon. Cassandra took Macedon, and Seleucus taking a big piece of Asia Minor and Mesopotamia. So there is a whole big piece of land there, and Ptolemy takes Syria and Egypt. Well, for Jewish backgrounds, it's only these latter two: Seleucus in the north and Ptolemy in the south that will be important. It's only those two that come to dominate Israel at one time and another.

### **Palestine under the Ptolemaic Dynasty, 301 – 198 BC**

Well, that brings us to the Ptolemaic dynasty, which continues to 30 BC when Cleopatra commits suicide. The Ptolemies had control of Palestine only

from 301 BC to 198 BC. While the various generals are fighting for control, there's one point when a fifth general whom we have not mentioned here, named Antigonus, [who] looks like he might get the whole thing, but the other generals gang up on him. If you've ever played the war game *Risk*, you realize that sometimes it's necessary to do things like that to keep one person from winning the game, and that's basically what the generals do. While the generals are out fighting Antigonus, Ptolemy sneaks in and grabs all of Palestine. Ptolemy is noted for reasonably favorable treatment of the Jews both in Palestine and also the Jews who have wound up in Egypt because a large number of Jews had settled in Alexandria by this time. So there are still some problems here and there, but that's basically the situation, and that's from a little over a century 301-198.

The Seleucid dynasty does not continue as long. It falls to Rome in 63 BC, but it does control Palestine from 198 BC to about 160. The rulers of the Ptolemies are pretty invariably called Ptolemy, and the historians today call them Ptolemy 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, but in antiquity they all had a second nickname: so Ptolemy Soter—Ptolemy the Savior, if you like—but not understood quite in Christian terms. Ptolemy Fatso that was another name, but probably not to his face, but various of those.

The Seleucid rulers tended to have two or three names that you see rotate back and forth. One was "Seleucus" and one was "Antiochus." In the long series of wars between the Seleucids and the Ptolemies, the Seleucids finally get Palestine from the Ptolemies.

Then we jump one to the 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> ruler of the Seleucids, [and that] is a fellow called Antiochus IV, known better as Antiochus Epiphanies. He viewed himself as a manifestation of the God Zeus. The Jews called him Antiochus Epimanes, "Crack-pot," or something of that sort: "Mad man." Anyway, he favored Hellenistic Jews.

Stop and back up for a moment. The Ptolemaic dynasty controlled Egypt, which consisted primarily of Egyptians with some Jews, and others in Alexandria, primarily, and then the Greeks overall. You didn't have so much ethnic diversity that that was a huge problem. But in the Seleucid dynasty, which covered all these different nationalities from Asia Minor and down the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers and almost over to India, you did. So the Seleucids, in trying to unify their empire, tried to push Hellenism on all the people who wanted to cooperate with the empire and become wealthy, and that sort of thing. So when Antiochus IV becomes the Seleucid ruler, he favors the Hellenistic faction among the Jews in Jerusalem and they, perhaps fawning on him to a certain extent, want to establish Jerusalem as a Hellenistic city, which will be named Antioch. Okay. He permits that. Well, that's pretty much a disaster to the Orthodox Jews to have that happen.

We will come back to the problem there because that will eventually lead to the Maccabean revolt. Antiochus the IV will later attempt, around 168 BC, to abolish Judaism, and we're going to discuss that a lot in our next section.

Well, so that's a little bit of the infighting and such that leads to the spread of Alexander's empire over almost all the Middle East, and then it is breaking into pieces with his death, and then the pieces fighting it out and particularly the northern piece, the Seleucids, fighting the southern piece, the Ptolemies, for control of Israel/Palestine, whatever you want to call it.

### **Hellenism**

A very important feature of this time period then in regard to Israel and Jewish background is Hellenism. Hellenism comes from the Greek word *Hellas*, which is the Greeks' own name for Greece. Our name Greece comes from the Latin and comes from the name that the Romans had given to some Greeks living at the bottom of the Italian boot. They called them *Grikei*. I'm not sure how the ending goes there: *Grikas* I guess. Hellenism means "Greek-like," and so it is the name for Greek culture as it develops in the east after Alexander.

So an attempt to Grecianize the Syrian culture, the Jewish culture, the Egyptian culture, etc., would be Hellenism, if you like. Well, that obviously had a significant influence on Judaism, so that by New Testament times we see Ptolemy is a pretty thoroughly Hellenized Jew.

Josephus is a slightly Hellenized Jew, and there were guys further over than Philo, if you like. It appears perhaps that Hellenism was somewhat influenced by Judaism, and that's argued over some. But one of the features of Hellenism was, what should we say, historians of religion call "syncretism." It comes from the verb in Greek meaning "to mix." So syncretism is a place where two, three, four religions come in contact and their ideas get mixed with one another.

Probably the commonest idea right around us in the last decade, or century anyway, has been the New Age movement which is a syncretism between Christianity and, say, Buddhism or Hinduism. Adopting elements from each, if you like, would be an example of that. You see it very much in the Syrian temple at Baalbek in Lebanon today where I had a chance to visit that just before things fell apart in 1975 or 6, whenever they fell apart. I was there in '4. That was a temple that was in the sight of Baal worship, and that's where the name "Baalbek" comes from: Baal of Beka Valley. But when the Greeks came in, the god Baal had been re-identified as Zeus. And then when the Romans came in, the god Baal-Zeus had been re-identified as Jupiter, etc. And so you had all that sort of thing going on.

That probably even is the explanation for some of the polytheism you see around the world; it's that two cultures come together. One has a chief goddess and the other a chief god, and they do some compromise or something. We don't know; we weren't back there and don't have time machines, but certainly something of that sort has happened in history. Well, that's obviously going to cause a problem for the Jews then when Hellenism is pushed in a religious way in

Palestine, and there's certainly people willing to do that.

There, of course, are various schools of philosophy back in Greece, and those come to have influence in the East as well; and we of course hear of Paul in Acts speaking at the Aeropagus in Athens and talks among the Epicureans and such, and the Stoics. And Josephus is, excuse me, Philo is influenced by Stoic- and Platonic-type ideas.

The early Christians, particularly early Christian philosopher theologians, are influenced by Stoicism and such as well. I'm not going to give you a tour of these philosophies right here. But much of the impact of Hellenism in the East was the political benefits that when Alexander's successors took all these areas. They were going to basically re-found a lot of the existing cities as Greek cities, and in a Greek city the people who had the impact were the citizens.

Citizens weren't just people who lived in the city, people who do that in general; they were people who had the right to vote in some sense, who had the right to hold offices, etc., in the city. There would be lots of other people in the city who were just resident aliens, or slaves, or something of that sort, that were much the lower level, etc. So if you're a Jewish boy and you want to get ahead, and you're living in Alexandria, or you're living in Antioch, or something of that sort, there'll be a temptation at least to adopt whatever features of Hellenism are needed in order to be acceptable in the society.

So we see that going on. Somehow, for instance, Paul's family had become Roman citizens, and they were already citizens of Tarsus. So somewhere back several generations, back up the line, his family had been important enough to get a citizenship in Tarsus and then citizenship in Rome. That may have had to do with the fact that they were tent makers and that the Romans needed tent makers for campaigns. I have no idea just how that might have happened, but the effect was such that Paul was borne a citizen of Rome whereas the military officer there

in Jerusalem had to buy his citizenship. Obviously not as prestigious at that point. So Hellenism is pretty important, and we see that in connection with the whole Hasmonean Revolt.

Another important feature of the Greek Period here in Israel is the translation of the Bible into Greek: what we call the Septuagint translation of the Bible into Greek. The version got started probably around 250 BC, so less than a century after Alexander had taken the area. We have a work we call the letter of Aristeus, which comes from probably about a century after that, and it gives us a narrative of the origin of the Septuagint. We are told here that Ptolemy II, so the second ruler down in Egypt of the Greek people who came to control Egypt after the death of Alexander, wanted to build the biggest library in the world, and so he got this fellow for his librarian, and the librarian told him they were trying to collect all kinds of works to put into the library. And the librarian said, "Well, we should have a copy of the Jewish Law." Apparently, according to the story at least, it did not exist in Greek at that point, and so Ptolemy funded sending delegates up to Jerusalem to get 72 Jewish elders who had come down to Egypt and translate the Law. So the story goes then that they did come down, and they translated the Law and the result was the Septuagint translation.

However, the story gets better, if you like. As time goes on, some of the later editions to the story is that the translation covers the whole of the Old Testament though, in fact, as the letter of Aristeus goes, it calls it the Jewish Law, and that's a little tricky because the term "law" could mean whole Old Testament, or it could mean the Torah—the Pentateuch—if you like.

A later edition that surely would have shown up in the letter of Aristeus, if it were true, is that the translators divided into 36 pairs and worked independently, and they produced 36 identical versions of the story of the Old Testament, which probably lies behind the idea a number of people had that the translation itself was an inspired translation. There's some skepticism regarding the details of the story,

particularly later editions. The general opinion of the story today is that the translation into Greek that we call the Septuagint was apparently made in Alexandria, which is where the story puts it, and that the Pentateuch, the Five Books of Moses appear to have been translated as a unit, most probably around 250 BC. So we've got a pretty unified style all through that, and the way of handling different translation matters there, which is not the case for many of the other Greek parts of the Old Testament as we have it.

The scrolls may well have come from Jerusalem, and possibly the translators had to do with some of the details about the text the Old Testament, working out matters regarding Babylonian-type version of the Old Testament, and a Jerusalem version, and a Samaritan version, and then things of that sort. Given the date 250 BC then, presumably Ptolemy II allowed the work, and he may have given aid to it. So we are in a situation again without any time machines, but it looks like at least a substantial amount of the story is true.

The Septuagint translation of the Bible [is] very, very important for a number of reasons: It appears to be the longest translation of any ancient writing known in antiquity, so that is rather striking. It gives the text of the Old Testament a century or so before the oldest Hebrew text we have for most of the Old Testament. It set the pattern for Greek theological terms as used in the New Testament as well as in the Old Testament. It put the Old Testament in the universal language of the Mediterranean of that time, at least of the east Mediterranean world at that time, and it became the Old Testament of the Early Church. Obviously, once the Gospel spreads substantially beyond Israel, the majority of people were not native Hebrew speakers.

### **Antiochus IV [Antiochus Epiphanes]**

We move on then from Palestine under the Greeks to Jewish independence under the Hasmoneans in 160 BC, down almost a century to 63 BC. We start out

again with Antiochus IV, Antiochus Epiphanies, and the "Abomination of Desolation." Antiochus IV had actually come to the throne by usurping the throne from his underage nephew in 175 BC. He tries even harder than the earlier Seleucids had done to unify this diverse empire by means of Hellenism, so he favors the Hellenistic Jews in Jerusalem, and they refound Jerusalem as Antiochia, or what we would call Antioch today. He deposes the orthodox high priest, a fellow name Onias III, for Onias' brother, Jason, who is much more favorable to Hellenism. That surely caused some problems, but nowhere near the problems caused when he later deposes Jason for Menelaus who is not in the high priestly families. He's apparently a priest who had bribed Antiochus to get the office. Menelaus had offered a big price, but as it turns out, ironically, wasn't able to raise the money after Jason had already been deposed. That's the danger of depending on unpaid bribes.

Meanwhile, Antiochus is off fighting in Egypt trying to get control of Ptolemy's side of the empire. Antiochus, like many of the guys who control these two big pieces, had a desire to take the other big piece and get nearly as much empire as Alexander (the Great) had had. So he goes down into Egypt, and in 168 BC it looks like he's going to defeat the Ptolemies when the Romans show up. A Roman fellow who had known Antiochus from maybe not childhood, but his teenage years—I think Antiochus had been a hostage in Rome at that point—comes to Antiochus and says, "The Roman senate says you need to move out of Egypt and go back home." Antiochus says, "I'll think about it." And the Roman pulls out his staff and draws a circle in the sand around Antiochus and says, "Stand there while you think about it."

So Antiochus goes back and he's not happy as he's coming out of Egypt having been overawed by the Romans. He finds out that a rebellion is going on in Israel when he's heading into that area. Namely, it's Jason who has rebelled against Menelaus. So Antiochus IV decides to try and destroy Judaism. He forbids

circumcision; he forbids observing kosher food laws; he tries to destroy Scripture, and he rededicates the temple to Zeus. He considered himself a manifestation of Zeus and sets up a statue that might have resembled himself. We don't have any pictures of the statue and we don't know exactly what Antiochus looked like anyway. That sets off what we call the Maccabean revolt.

### **Maccabean Revolt 167 BC to 134 BC**

#### **Judas**

So we turn to look at the Maccabean Revolt, 167 BC to about 134 BC. While the Seleucids have put down the opposition in Israel, or so they think, the Seleucid government then sends out officers to go through all the towns in Judea enforcing Antiochus' decrees and commanding pagan sacrifice. When they get to the little village of Modein, there's an aged priest Mattathias there, and the whole village is brought out to do the pagan sacrifice. One of the Jews in the village starts to sacrifice, and this aged priest, Mattathias, kills the guy. Well, that would be a pretty disastrous thing to do except that there were more villagers there than the officials and his troops. So they kill the official and the troops, and naturally that's going to get back to headquarters fairly quick. So Mattathias and his five grown sons call for an armed resistance and flee to the mountains and caves, etc.

That is the origin of the revolt that leads us to one of Mattathias' sons. Judas, the third son of Mattathias, had a military name, "The Maccabee," meaning "the hammer." Kind of like Stonewall Jackson or one of those military names that generals sometimes get. Well, Judas then leads a military campaign and manages, by ambush techniques and by knowing the terrain in a way that the Seleucids don't, to destroy several Seleucid armies. The Seleucids [are] basically working in terms of a buildup, and they don't want to send in more troops than they need, but they always underestimate how many they need. So as they gradually build up, Judas succeeds; and as Judas begins to succeed, more Jews flock to his standards. Judas' forces grow with the success, and they match the Seleucid escalation.

Finally, (we'll call them the Maccabees) the followers of Judas take Jerusalem except for the citadel, the main fortress. I don't think that's actually the fortress Antonia that you see in the New Testament time maps, but a predecessor to that. They take Jerusalem, [and] pen up the remaining Seleucids and Hellenistic Jews in the citadel. They cleanse the temple (remember it had been a site of worship of Zeus for a while here), and they rededicate the temple; and that is in December of 164 BC. That becomes the origin of Hanukkah, or the Feast of Dedication.

Meanwhile, Antiochus IV dies in 163 BC, and Lysias takes over as regent for the person who is going to become king when he gets old enough. Lysias would rather get out of this thing, so he offers peace terms that are acceptable to some of the very pious Jews, though not to the Maccabees. This splits the opposition against themselves. So just a few years later the Seleucid forces come back and Judas and his are forces heavily outnumbered. Judas is killed in battle in 160 BC.

### **Other Maccabees: Jonathan and Simon**

Well, that's not the end of Mattathias' kids. Judas was the third son, and there's still two sons left at this point out of the five. (The other two have already died.) One of these is Jonathan; he will become the ruler of Israel from 160-142 BC. The other one is Simon, and he will become ruler from 142-134 BC.

The Seleucid Empire by this point has been weakened by division over the succession after Antiochus, and so Jonathan and Simon, in their turn, are able by diplomacy to gain strength until the land of Judea becomes virtually independent. It turns out that both Jonathan in 142 BC, and Simon in 134 BC, are murdered by opponents, but not before Simon has gained a hereditary priesthood and the rule of Israel for his family. With Simon's death then his son comes to rule, and so when you've got two successive father-son things ruling, that can be counted as a dynasty. You probably could have counted it already from Jonathan. The

Hasmonean dynasty is typically dated then from 134 BC on to 63 BC.

### **Hasmoneans: John Hyrcanus**

The first guy is Simon's son who has the slightly more complicated name John Hyrcanus and he rules from 134 BC to 104 BC. He is very successful. The Seleucid dynasty has become weak, and John has become rather strong militarily. He is able to greatly expand the Judean territory, so he picks up the coastal cities which had long been lost to the Jews. Remember when they came back from Babylonian captivity they basically settled in the hill country around Jerusalem, etc. So he takes coastal cities; he takes the territory [of] the Edomites (Edom) to the south, and the territory of the Samaritans (Samaria) to the north. So it becomes a very significant territory at this point.

During his reign of 30 years we first hear in Josephus of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisees had apparently been in favor initially, but by making a suggestion that was not PC: if you suggested that John should resign the high priesthood because his mother gave birth to him while she was captive, which made some suggestions as to whether he was legitimate or not. He decided to go with the Sadducees instead. So the Sadducees become the in-party at the time, and they will be that off and on down to the New Testament times.

Well, in 104 he dies, and one of his sons is Aristobulus. He reigns for about a year. He kills several brothers to, I suppose, strengthen his take on the throne. That was not uncommon, I'm afraid, among these types of situations, and he takes the title "king." Judah is just a general; Jonathan is a general; Simon is not only a general but also high priest (even though he belongs to a priestly family, but he's not in the high priestly line). But now Aristobulus takes the title of king, and his successor does not resign that title. Aristobulus doesn't last long. He dies within a year. Out of fear he assassinated and killed all his brothers and dies from drink and probably from disease of some sort. One of his brothers is still alive in prison. So when Aristobulus dies, his widow releases this brother Alexander from prison and

marries him.

### **Alexander Jannaeus**

So John Hyrcanus's widow and brother become the royal pair. So Alexander Jannaeus is the name of the younger brother [who] rules from 102-76 BC. He continues expansion of the kingdom until it is nearly as big of that of David and Solomon. So we are getting a rather powerful local kingdom here that is really carved out of the Seleucid Empire that has been falling apart all this time. During his reign the Pharisees revolt against him and call for the Syrians; that is, the remnants of the Seleucid's to come in and help. Alexander is about to lose when the Pharisees get second thoughts. Would it really be better to have the Syrians (the Seleucid's) in control of the territory? So they defect back again.

Well, Alexander wins, but has mixed feelings about the Pharisees. After all, yes, if they hadn't come back, he would've lost. But if they hadn't revolted in the first place, he wouldn't have gotten into the problem. So he crucifies a bunch of the Pharisees.

### **Salome Alexandra**

Well, he dies in 76 BC, and his wife, the one who had been Aristobulus' wife and then his wife, comes to be the ruling queen for a short period, 75-67BC. Her name is Salome Alexandra, and she succeeds.

She has two sons, and they are called Hyrcanus II (John Hyrcanus then would be Hyrcanus I), and Aristobulus II. Hyrcanus is the milder and older of the two, and he is made high priest because Salome can't be high priest, and Aristobulus is given military command. Unfortunately, Aristobulus is the person who is very ambitious and he wants to rule. When Salome Alexander dies in 66 BC, we come to the crucial event which leads to the end of Hasmonean independence. She dies and is succeeded by Hyrcanus II who is supported by the Pharisees, but Aristobulus II who is supported by the Sadducees takes the throne away from him. Hyrcanus flees to a neighboring nation, opens a civil war, and

calls on the Romans for aide. At this point the Romans are growing strong in the Middle East, or Near East as we would call it, and they are anxious to come in and help out.

### **Three Groups: Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes**

Well, before we run along to that, we come back and look at some of the features of this time period, and one of the important ones is the three groups that we hear about in Josephus and in the NT. The Pharisees and Sadducees we hear about in both, and the Essenes we hear about only in the Josephus material. The origins of these three groups are obscure but, all three apparently rise during this period, the Maccabean period, *circa* 168-63 BC, a century or so. The Pharisees and the Essenes apparently rise from the very pious group that joined with Judah in the Maccabean revolt, the group we call the *Hasidim*. Hasidim is a noun for one who is faithful to the covenant. You see [it] rather regularly in the Hebrew of the Old Testament. *Hesed*, from the perspective of a human towards God, means faithfulness to the covenant. The perspective of God towards humans also means faithfulness to the covenant; that comes across as "loving kindness," "mercy," things of that sort because the covenant is a merciful covenant, not something that the humans beat out the features of in discussion with God, or something of that sort.

### **Essenes**

Well, a little about the Pharisees, Sadducees and the Essenes; let's look first of all at their theology. We think the name Essenes comes from *hasid*. The problem is Greek not really having a good "h" sound, so lots of things get lost. In Hebrew you got *hallelujah*, and in Greek you have *allelujah*; we think that there's an argument over where that comes from. So if that's right, the Essenes are "the faithful ones." They're what we might call "super-Pharisees." They do the Pharisees one better, and in fact, they decided that the temple was ruled by people

who were not sufficiently orthodox, and so they would no longer mess with the temple. In a great anachronism we can say their view of their relationship of God's sovereignty to human responsibility is Calvinistic. Understand that was not a term in existence at that time. Their sources of authority were the Old Testament, but with some secret books. We think we now know what some of the secret books are. They would be things like the *Manual of Discipline*, the *Book of Enoch*, and the *Book of Jubilee*; some of those kind of works would also fall into that category.

We're not sure what their view about survival is. Some think that they believed in resurrection, which would not be terribly surprising. Some think that they believed in immortality of the soul, but not resurrection. So I put a question mark in that question in my notes here. They had a great emphasis on angels, and that seems to have come from *Enoch* and the *Jubilees* where we get the names of a bunch of other angels and some history of their activity. It is not quite as elaborate as Milton's *Paradise Lost*, but still a good bit of information there and, they had a great deal of emphasis on eschatology.

### **Pharisees**

Contrast those Essenes with the Pharisees. Their name we think comes from *parash*, "separate." So they were the separatists. Not really separatists compared with the Essenes because they didn't leave society, but there was a great emphasis on ritual purity and on building a hedge about the law. The idea being, if you don't want people walking in your fields, you put a hedge around the thing so that they can't get through. So if we don't want people transgressing the law, we build some extra laws that we put around the outside. So you have to stop work before the Sabbath a half hour before the Sabbath, and things like that would be the kind of categories that would form a hedge around the law.

Their view on sovereignty and responsibility are what we call today Calvinistic. Their view on sources of, what shall we say, revelation, would be the Old Testament plus the oral tradition. So they believed that Moses had given lots of other information at the time, and that was an oral tradition. So in that sense they resemble Catholicism a little bit with the Bible plus the tradition of the Church, or even the papal statements--obviously the Pharisees had no person equivalent to the Pope. The Pharisees definitely believe in the resurrection. I'm not so sure about the Essenes, but the Pharisees definitely did. They definitely believed in angels, but at least we don't hear about names of lots of angels or anything of that sort. So they don't seem to have the emphasis that the Essenes did on angels. They believed in eschatology as well but their emphasis was more on the last judgment than on the details of what might happen.

### **Sadducees**

Well, that brings us down to the Sadducees. There is some argument where the name came from. Probably the commonest view is the suggestion that it came from the Hebrew *sedeq*, or righteous. They were the righteous ones. Most groups when they pick names for their own group are favorable names. We call the Mormons "the Mormons," but they call themselves "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." We call another group "the Quakers," but they call themselves "the Friends," or the "Society of Friends." So usually the group's own name is more favorable. Some people think it came from Zadok but I don't know. The Sadducees were more pragmatic than even the Pharisees and tended to be somewhat compromising, and in that way they were able to work with whatever powers were around. So they got along better with the Roman government. If we think in terms of God's sovereignty and human responsibility, we'd have to call the Sadducees Arminians. So there's a big emphasis on human responsibility and human freedom, etc.

What was a source of revelation [for the Sadducees]? Origen, I believe it is, claims that they only hold the Pentateuch, but the evidence we've got suggests more [of] the Old Testament. They were suspicious of the oral tradition of the Pharisees, so at least anything of a different tradition. They probably weren't into the Essene secret books either. I think that probably fits better with the evidence we've got.

What about the resurrection question? The New Testament tells us that they didn't believe in resurrection, but it doesn't tell us what they did believe in. Josephus tells us that they believed in no survival: when you're dead you do not exist anymore. That really fits better with Jesus' response to them on this whole resurrection question than the idea that they believed in, say, the immortality of the soul or something of that sort. They apparently did not believe in angels, and we don't know exactly what that meant because we don't have any of their writings. Whether it meant they believed angels don't show up today, or whether they believed that there never were any and there's some other explanation [for the mention of angels]. You might say, "How could they not believe in angels if they believed in the Old Testament?" Well, theological liberals and Protestants can believe in lots of things, or not believe in lots of things that the Bible explicitly says are, or aren't, and they don't go that way.

Emphasis on eschatology? No, the Sadducees believed that since you don't exist after you die, there is no judgment. The judgment is in this life. If you are prosperous, God is favorable to you, so they attracted the upper class, wealthy people, etc.

### **Influence and Survival of the Three Groups**

Well, that's the theology of these three groups, taking theology in a rather broad sense. What about their influences in survival? As far as we can tell, there weren't a lot of Essenes, and they tended to be withdrawn from society; so obviously not quite so able to have as much influence. The Pharisees, on the other

hand, were popular, but not apparently in actually a large group. So they were just a very influential group. The Sadducees were even smaller than the Pharisees, certainly, and probably smaller than the Essenes as well, but they were the richest.

The Essenes, being withdrawn from society, were withdrawn from politics. The Pharisees had some influence politically, but they were dominant religiously. Josephus tells us that their way of reading things was the way that the people went, and the Sadducees took their life in their hands to oppose that too much. The Sadducees, however, were dominant politically, realizing that that meant they were under the Romans, so they couldn't do anything they wanted.

Influence and the survival of the Essenes: they wrote or copied the Dead Sea Scrolls. So their influence picks up again when they become known there in 1948. But there is some evidence that some of their scrolls were found in the early medieval period. So that we have an early Jewish group that founded some of those communities and decided that the oral tradition of the rabbis was wrong and went the other way. Their name has slipped my mind at the moment, so maybe it will come back before I finish this section.

The influence of the Pharisees and [their] survival is pretty substantial. They survived the destruction of Jerusalem to become the dominant group among the surviving Jews. The rabbinic literature is by the heirs of the Pharisees, so that's the trail that's come to dominate Orthodox Judaism over the whole of centuries. For the Sadducees, as far as we know, none of their known writings survive. We don't actually know the name of any of their writings, as far as I know; but none of the writings that survived from that period are known to be from the Sadducees. Some of them might be, but we don't know quite enough about them to say.

The Essenes: Qumran was destroyed in 68 BC, so in the middle of the Jewish war, and some Essenes survived. Some, in fact, were apparently at the last stand at Masada in AD 72. And some of their material shows up in the Cairo

Geniza, the place for hiding documents—old documents in a synagogue. What we call the *Damascus Document* is pretty surely theirs, and a copy of that was found in the Cairo Geniza about a century before, no not that long, about 70 or 60 years before they discovered the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Pharisee group survived the destruction in AD 70 and began to dominate Judaism, and it looks like the Sadducees were more or less destroyed with the Temple. Not to say every last person was, but something in that direction.

### **Palestine under the Romans**

Well, our last category: Palestine under the Romans; actually, our next to last category now that I think about it, from 63 BC to 135 AD where we will stop this discussion. But actually going on from there until the Muslims come in in the 600's, Palestine is under the Romans. The Hasmonean Dynasty ends in 63 BC. Remember Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II have fallen out. Aristobulus II had grabbed the throne, Hyrcanus II runs for cover and called on the Romans. The Romans intervene in the dispute, and they are able to put down Aristobulus, and Judea now loses much of its conquered territories. Hyrcanus is not made king, but he would have been king otherwise. He is made Ethnarch, meaning ruler of a people/group of Judea, but Judea at this time also includes Idumea, Perea, Galilee etc.--so a demotion from king.

This time period is characterized by what we may call the Roman Peace or *Pax Romana* from 30 BC, where Augustus establishes control over the empire for about two centuries, to about 170 AD. Two centuries of peace over the Roman Empire. That isn't to say there weren't revolts and such.

Beginning with Augustus, there was great growth and prosperity, and the Roman Empire reaches its peak in the second century AD. The *Pax Romana* is very important for the spread of Christianity. So we have this Roman peace over the whole area. Some other features related to the Roman rule are important to the

spread of Christianity: the Romans built an impressive road system over that whole area. There was no extensive road system to match it until the development of the automobiles in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The lack of national boundaries, I mean there were obviously ethnic groups here and there, but there was no need for passports or the ancient equivalent of that to go from place to place within the empire. So it was very important, humanly speaking, for the spread of Christianity.

### **The Family of Herod**

We should say a word about the Herod family because they become important at this point. We haven't really heard anything about them before this, but it starts with Herod's father whose name was Antipater. He was an Idumean; that is, an Edomite. He was an advisor to Hyrcanus II, and because Hyrcanus was rather mild mannered and unambitious, Antipater appeared to be the power behind the throne. When the Romans took over, he was made procurator for Judea for aiding Julius Caesar. Procurator meant the fellow that was responsible for the emperor's affairs in a particular territory or country. Antipater would be characteristic of many rulers of one sort or another who made his own sons administrators under him. Those sons were Phasael Phasael, someone who many have probably never heard about, and Herod who nearly everyone has heard about at this point.

Antipater is assassinated in 43 BC, and this leads to the rise of Herod. We call [him] Herod "the Great" who is important from 37 BC to his death. I have down here 4 BC, although there's some argument over that, but that's still the standard date currently. With the death of Antipater, the Romans appoint Herod and Phasael joint tetrarchs of this territory. Tetrarch is another word you see "arch" on the end of it, means "ruler," and "tetra" quarter, or four. This term was used for sub-territory in something. They were tetrarchs of Judea, Herod and Phasael, but the territories included Galilee and Samaria and Idumea as well as Judea.

Well, just about this time the Parthians from the east end of the Roman Empire invade the eastern end of the Roman Empire and they briefly take Palestine and they kill Phasaël. They capture Phasaël actually, put him in prison, and Phasaël bashes his head out to avoid torture or something of that sort. Herod manages to flee and makes it to Rome in 40 BC. The senate there appoints him the King of the Jews. That doesn't cost them a whole lot. The idea is they found somebody who is pretty ambitious and they will allow him to borrow a lot of money from various people; he doesn't get a big stipend from the Romans. The Romans were fairly cheap in operating their society (we won't go into that here). So he's allowed at least to borrow money, and he's got this authority from the senate, and so he goes back, returns with an army, and he takes Jerusalem in 37 BC. So he now becomes the King of the Jews, 40 BC in name, 37 BC in fact.

There is a problem though: The Romans, if you were remembering Roman history from this period, which you probably don't; I never had anything in school on that point. With the assassination of Julius Caesar, we have a triumvirate. It's Mark Antony, and the guy who is going to be called Augustus eventually, and Lepidus, I believe, is the third guy. The eastern part of the empire is under Antony, and Antony is very much under the influence of Cleopatra. Cleopatra would like Judea. So Herod's throne is very insecure until Antony and Cleopatra both commit suicide in 31 BC. Thereafter, he is in pretty good shape until his own death.

However, he has terrible family troubles all during this period; he kills his favorite wife Mariamne who was a descendant of the Maccabees, which, how should we say, is his connection with the Maccabees, because otherwise he's just basically an appointee of the Romans. In the course of time he kills three of his own sons. Two of them are sons of Mariamne, and he's afraid they're going to try to get the throne before he is ready to give it up, and I don't know for sure if he was right about that or not. Then he kills a third son that was jealous of the other two sons and got them killed and such. It got so bad at one point that Augustus,

commenting on Herod's kosher food activity, says, "It's safer to be one of Herod's pigs than one of his sons," and there's a little play in Greek between *hus* "pig" and *huios* "son," so that's the situation there.

Herod, however, does have some accomplishments. He is not called "the Great" because he murdered his wife and three sons or anything of that sort. He's called "the Great" because he ruled a very large territory. He refurbished the Jerusalem temple, starting in 19 BC and through the rest of his life, and then going on to 66 AD. They were working off and on in that temple, and basically it just got finished in time for its destruction after the Jewish revolt.

He did a number of building projects elsewhere in Israel, at Caesarea on the coast, [and] at Sebaste, which had been the city of Samaria earlier. So if you go back to Jerusalem today and look at some of the archeology, some of the most prominent ruins that are at least above the surface, are often Herodian ruins of one sort or another. Some of the walls around the city of Jerusalem, and the tomb of Abraham and such in Hebron etc., fall into that kind of category.

The killing of Bethlehem's children, very explicit in the Gospel of Matthew, although we don't have any explicit statement about that in the other historical record of Herod, fits his character very much. I mean, he killed three of his own sons. They would have succeeded him one or the other of them, [and] he was just unhappy they wanted to succeed too fast. So you can see how a non-Herodian claimant to the throne he would have considered very, very dangerous.

### **Herod's descendants**

Well, when Herod finally did die, he had prepared a will which, however, had to be validated by Augustus in Rome; so in his will he specified that his son Archelaus would be king and would rule over the major part of his empire and under his territory, and then Antipas would rule over Galilee and Perea; and Philip would rule over some of the area north of that: Iturea and Trachonitis. Those guys

then headed off to Rome to get validation. Jesus has a parable about a nobleman who goes off to a far country to receive a kingdom in return, and that's something that would have resonated with his hearers because of something of that very sort had happened just a little bit earlier.

Well, Archelaus has several people in the Herod family that oppose his becoming king, and so Augustus gives him the title of Ethnarch, but will be turned into king if he does a great job. He doesn't do a great job, and so he gets deposed in about ten years. The other two brothers, however, do a fairly decent job in their territories; and so Antipas rules to 39 AD, Philip rules to 34 AD, but Archelaus only to about 6 AD. Herod has two descendants besides these, [and] a grandson and great grandson who rule as well. These are decedents through Mariamne and the descent through one or both of the sons who Herod killed. One of them is Herod Agrippa I, and he gets the title "King of the Jews" for a short period, 41-44 AD, but then dies, and his death is narrated for us in both Josephus and in Acts. Then his son Herod Agrippa II becomes king, but not king of the Jews; he's king of another territory, and he lives to about 100 AD. So that's the end of the Herod dynasty then finally at that point.

### **Messianic Expectation**

Well, we do have one more section here I want to say a little word about. It's actually two more sections—I never keep track exactly. One rather important one for this period of the Roman rule is messianic expectations at the end of the New Testament Period. There was, for some reason—Josephus mentions it; Suetonius mentions it; and Tacitus mentions it—there was a considerable excitement over the idea that someone coming from Israel would rule the world at about this time. So this was strong in the first century AD. It was influential in the Jewish Revolt, and my suggestion is it has something to do with Daniel's 70 week passage. They probably didn't have enough information to know exactly when that

ran out, but it was pretty clear it was going to run out in what we call the first century AD. I have a little discussion of that in a chapter called *The Time of the Messiah* in a book called *The Evidence of Prophecy*, and I think there's also a research report up on our IBRI website about that with the same title.

[<http://www.ibri.org/RRs/RR009/09timeofmessiah.htm>]

Regarding messianic expectation at the Inter-Testament Period, what did the people expect? What kind of messiah did they expect? What kind of person did they expect? Well, as we look at the material we've got, we see that the views change with time. The early extra-biblical materials on the Messiah picture the Messiah as being more than human, though there's no clear view of his deity in any of the extra-biblical materials. There are some even more than hints in the Old Testament itself, and obviously the New Testament goes that way; but the other extra-biblical material seems to go in an angelic direction of some sort, but not much further than that.

The later rabbinic material seems to tend to minimize the Messiah in one way or another. The Old Testament data regarding Messiah posed various paradoxes regarding the office, his activity, the type of coming, the type of being, *et cetera*, and I suggest that these are solved by the New Testament and by Jesus, their candidate, if you like, and I have another article on the New Testament model of the Messiah, which goes by, I think, it's "The nature of the Messiah" in this book *The Evidence of Prophecy*, but New Testament models of Messiah are the chapter that's on the IBRI website, as an IBRI research report.

[<http://www.ibri.org/RRs/RR006/06ntmod.htm>]

We also find from [the] Inter-Testament Period various views on the Messianic Period: how would it relate to the time period we're living in now and how would it relate to the state after the resurrection, and things of that sort. It shows us that there's a certain sense in which the views of the Jews in trying to interpret what we call the Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible, regarding

eschatology have some similarity to the views of Christians today trying to interpret the New Testament regarding eschatology. One could even claim that their views of the Messianic Period have a vague resemblance to Amill, Pre-Mill, Post-Mill. They're not very close, but something in that direction. For instance, the various views viewed the time period we're in and give the title "This Age" and then "The Days of the Messiah" then "The Age to Come." In some views of the end of [the] age you had basically a Messianic Period only. So you have this age and the time of the Messiah, and so you had some kind of a millennium, we might say, on earth, but it was not clear what would happen after that. Other views had an *eschaton* only: this age and the age to come. So that would resemble in some way an Amillennial position, if you like. But the commonest view was This Age, the Time of the messiah and the age to come, which would be now, the millennium and the eternal state if you like. So that would fit a kind of premillennial eschatology of some particular sort.

The order of events, the Jewish interpreters at this time are basically taking all the Old Testament prophetic data that appears to be eschatological and are trying to figure out how to sort it. It's a little bit like putting pieces together of a puzzle but you don't have the picture so you just got the pieces. You look at the pieces and you say does this piece have that color on it and does this piece have that and well they match or whatever so it's a tougher job. Yet as you see it put together, they pick up a lot of things that at least premillennial Christians would say they got right. They really saw stuff in the Old Testament that we might have only noticed in the New Testament or something of that sort. So, for instance, they saw that there would be certain signs preceding the end: there'd be moral decay, there'd be calamities, there'd be signs in heaven, and there'd be a forerunner. Then the Messianic Kingdom would be established and the Messianic Kingdom would include the return of Israel from the exile, where perhaps pre-millennialists today would say perhaps there's going to be a substantial return first and then the

millennium, but even in that view you generally feel there'd be some return after that as well. There'll be punishment of the nations, and the Messiah will rule; and there are various views on what the Messiah would have to do with establishing the kingdom, whether it would be established first and then he would be brought in, or whether he'd be involved in establishing it. There are even models where there were two messiahs, one who would be establishing it and one who would actually rule, we're not going to go off there and that's probably even post inter-testament period anyway.

Then there are the days of the Messiah, what Christians would call the "millennium," and variable features in that as put together by different interpreters. What would be the place of the nations? Would they be included in this, or would they be under Israel, et cetera? But usually, the time the Messiah was seen as marvelous in one way or another, more miraculous than this age as you like, length uncertain and you have some going with 40 years, others going over 1000. It was typically seen as ending with the rebellion of Gog and Magog. It's interesting that phrase shows up in Revelation and also in Ezekiel.

Then what about the age to come? What Christians call the eternal state? They saw a resurrection, ; they saw a judgment; and they saw an eternal state of punishment or reward, so in that way it is similar to what we see.

### **End of the Jewish State and Fall of Jerusalem**

Two more things to say a little about quickly here: the end of the Jewish State and Palestine after the fall of Jerusalem. Both Rome and Israel, and at least some Jews, contributed substantially to the end of the Jewish State. The Roman procurators who controlled Palestine from AD 6–66, except the period from AD 41 to 44 when Herod Agrippa is in control, is not a good time for Israel. It began with the replacement of Archelaus in AD 6. He was deposed for misgovernment, so the Romans bring in their governors, a Prefect or Procurator. In AD 6 when this takes place, there is a revolt of the zealots regarding the census. They

gradually grow stronger as the Roman and Jewish relations deteriorate over the 60-year period. Then, in about 40 AD, the Roman emperor Gaius, better known to us as Caligula, has delusions of grandeur and orders that his own statue be erected in the Jerusalem Temple. Fortunately, he dies before the order was carried out, but the Roman procurator at the time really risked his life at the time to delay it. Then Caligula got assassinated by people in Rome who were interested in other things anyway.

The procurators continue, except for Herod Agrippa in AD 41-44 and the Jewish revolt. In general, the procurators did not understand the Jews. They were frequently antagonistic to the Jews; anti-Semitism was fairly common in the Greco-Roman world and such. So they tended to aggravate conditions, and in that way it strengthened the zealots who were against them. So the zealots became more popular as the situations got worse.

The last two of the Roman Procurators, Albinus and Florus, were especially wicked men. Well, that led to first Jewish revolt in AD 66–73. It actually was started by an instance between the Jews and Gentiles in Caesarea, which spread and was fanned by the procurator, and zealots who inflamed the whole country. Initially, the moderate Jews were able to take leadership, and that's how Josephus got in, but gradually they lost out to the more radical zealots. The revolt ended in the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in AD 70, and the Jewish state, and then the mopping up operation was completed with the fall of Masada by about AD 73.

### **Palestine after the Fall of Jerusalem**

Palestine after the fall of Jerusalem runs from AD 70-135 after the fall of Jerusalem. One of the important figures here is Rabbi Johanan ben Zakai. He was in Jerusalem during a siege and realized that this was going to be a disaster, and so with connivance of his disciples, he pretended to be sick of some probably very contagious disease and pretended to die, and they carry him out in a coffin; and

since it's a contagious disease, nobody is going to look in the coffin. Once they get out of range of the walls, he gets out of the coffin, and they flee to the Romans, etc. Johanan got permission from the Romans to establish [a] rabbinic school and a Sanhedrin in the coastal city of Jamnia; Yavneh is the Old Testament name. There he rebuilt Judaism without a state or temple along the lines of Pharisaism – that eventually led to the codification of oral law, the Mishnah, and later the Talmuds.

Around AD 90, the Jewish Christians were excluded from the synagogues by adding a curse on the Nazarenes to the synagogue liturgy somewhere around 90 – 100 AD. So after that point, there is obviously already tension between the Christians and the Jews about whether or not Jesus is the Messiah or not, but that kind of splits things. So the Christian Jews were no longer worshipping with the non-Christian Jews.

One last remark here in this time period: the Bar Kokhba, or the Second Revolt, is in AD 132–135. The Jews at this point had lost their state, though a lot of them had continued living in Israel, a lot of them had been carried off as slaves, particularly those who were taken in Jerusalem. But as we go on to 73 – 132, almost 60 years, and the Romans are preparing to build a pagan city on the site of Jerusalem and it will be named *Aelia Capitolina* in honor of the chief gods of the Roman pantheon. "*Aelia*" is the family name of Hadrian, the Roman Emperor, of that time. The Jews realized that if that happens, they aren't going to get Jerusalem back any time in the foreseeable future.

So, one of the chief rabbis of the time, Rabbi Akiba, recognized a fellow Simeon ben Koseba who was apparently willing to lead the revolt as Messiah as the fulfillment of the Number's prophecy in 24:17: "A star will arise from Jacob," and he comes to be known as Bar Kokva, or "Son of a Star" – kind of a play on his own name "ben Koseba." The revolt is initially successful. The Romans actually had control of their empire with a very small army, and so it was spread all over

the place. When there was a revolt that broke out typically, it was successful for a while until the Romans organized and brought their legions in, and that's what happened here, but it was eventually put down with very considerable slaughter. After that the Jews were forbidden near Jerusalem except on the Day of Atonement. After that Jerusalem ceases to be connected to Judaism.

Well, I think that gives you a bit of a tour, if you like, of the Jewish background running from the end of the Old Testament up past the New Testament to give you a feel of what was going on in that time period. So that's where we will stop for today.

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## Dr. Robert C. Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Lecture 3

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### Exegesis: Magoi (Mat. 2)

#### Exegesis versus Eisegesis

Good morning. We are continuing our course on Synoptic Gospels. We are going to look at our third unit, if you'd like. We call this unit "Introduction to Exegesis."

What is "exegesis?" It is a technical theological term that means, basically, interpretation, perhaps with a slightly different nuance. "Exegesis" comes from a Greek construction meaning "to lead out." The idea is leading the meaning that is in the text out of it. It is sometime contrasted with "eisegesis," which is when people put meaning into the text that the author did not put there. We want to try to avoid doing that if we can. Well, here we are going to provide kind of a quick sketch of things to think about when we are doing interpretation. A more thorough presentation of exegesis can be found in, perhaps, seminary courses on hermeneutics, or advanced Greek, or something of that sort. Two books I found helpful relating to the interpretation of the Bible are Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand*, 1994, by Bridgepoint, and Robert Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible*, Baker, 1997.

We are going to discuss several things here under exegesis. We are going to look at some features we need to continually build on in getting our exegesis. Then we are going to look at some of the genres that occur in the Synoptic Gospels. Then we are going to think about the narrative genre here in this unit of our course where we are going to discuss types of narratives within the Gospels. Finally, we will actually look at one: the story of the wise men in Matthew, chapter two.

Well, here are some features we need to continually build on: exegesis is not simply a mechanical process. You can't learn a few rules and just apply them without thinking. It's not either totally scientific, at least as the average person understands science, as there may be a lot of surprises. Of course, in real science, there are a lot of surprises, too. You may find yourself noticing things in a commentary that you didn't notice in the passage you're working on, or you may notice things in the passage you're working on that you didn't see discussed in a commentary. That can happen. You will not be an expert in exegesis after you finish this course or even after you graduate from Seminary; but if you work on these following items, the features we need to build on, your exegesis will get better and better as the years go on.

### **Major Principles of Interpretation**

So, what are these features? Well, let's look first of all at number one: English—or if English is not your native language, your native language—Bible knowledge. Bible knowledge we'll call it here. The more you know the rest of the Bible, the better you can understand the particular passage that you are working on. So that is something we need to do; we need to work on understanding all of the Bible. God really did design the Bible so that the Scriptures will help you to interpret Scripture. Since the advent of computer Bibles, we've had it a lot easier in trying to find all the occurrences of a particular word, or particular English word or, in the New Testament, a particular Greek word or, in the Old Testament, a particular Hebrew or Aramaic word elsewhere in Scripture. Even that, however, doesn't guarantee that you'll find all the relevant passages on a particular matter because some of them may not use the same terminology, but they are still talking about something that's very relevant to what you are concerned about.

Cross reference Bibles were designed to solve some of this by getting you to other such passages that might not use the same words, and topical concordances do the same kind of thing, but that doesn't guarantee you'll get

everything. Of course, we are not in general here trying to write doctoral dissertations, but we're trying to understand a passage; and I would say one significant goal is that when you finish studying a passage, you'll understand it better than you did before you started studying it. If you do that, your sermons, Bible teaching or Sunday school lessons, etc., should be reasonably interesting or helpful to the people you are working with.

So one important item to keep working on for the rest of your life is your knowledge of the Bible in your native, or heart, language. To help myself do this, I have tried to read through the Bible once a year and have done that for last forty or fifty years, I suppose. If you count the chapters in the Bible, the Old Testament has 929 chapters; the New Testament has 260 chapters: a total of 1189. So, to get through the Bible in one year, there are 365 days, let's say you need to read several chapters a day. To be exact, to get through once in 365 days, you need to read 3.26 chapters per day. Well, what's that going to work out to? You can do roughly three chapters a day with five on Sunday, if you like to do it that way. Or if you read 4 chapters a day, you can get through the Old Testament once and the New Testament twice. A lot of people use these one year Bibles which give you a passage out of the Old Testament, a passage out of the New Testament, a passage out of the Psalms, a little proverb, etc... They are certainly helpful for reading through the Bible. You may, however, lose a little bit on continuity with jumping back and forth that way, but I have certainly done that many times, so I think that is helpful. I have also tried to use various versions of the Bible, and so have read a bunch of different versions. I once spent two years reading through the NIV Study Bible by reading all those notes as well as all the text, and so those sort of things can be helpful in strengthening your native language Bible knowledge.

There are some other things you can do. In a seminary program we're generally assuming you are learning Hebrew and Greek and such. You need to keep working on your Biblical language competency. After you put in all the work—considerable work—in learning Greek and Hebrew and such, much of this

knowledge will evaporate if you don't keep using it. My suggestion is that you put in some time each day or each week on this. If you do that, I think your Hebrew and Greek will get in somewhat better form and stay in better form if you like. One of my former colleagues, Tom Taylor, who is a professor at Biblical, he recommended a devotional book. I don't know whether it's still out there or not; you might have to do a Google search on it. It is called *Light for the Path*, and it provided a short passage from the Greek New Testament for each day and a verse or so from the Hebrew Bible for each day with some help there on translating it.

Another method—we're presuming you are in Christian service of some sort here—is to basically translate the passage you are going to preach from that week, or if you're teaching Sunday school, Bible class, or Bible study or something, to translate that passage—trying to mix Old Testament and New Testament so as to keep both languages functional. A friend of mine, Al Jackson, who was a Pastor in Virginia for many years (I don't know whether he's still alive now), used to go through Metzger's *Lexical Aids for Students of New Testament Greek* every year! That's pretty impressive; so that's better than I did, I have to say. I tried to get down to thirty regularly in the frequency list, but there are a lot of lists that go beyond that and carry you down words that occur ten times or more.

Well, I would recommend you try to review your grammar now and then, and that's for most people not terribly exciting. But also work on sight reading Greek; see how much Greek you can understand by doing it without looking in a dictionary or lexicon. One way that often new seminary students will do that sort of thing is they take their Greek New Testament or Hebrew Bible with them to church. When the Bible reading takes place in the service, they try to follow along with that and that can be helpful as well. You may get tired after a while of carrying an English Bible, a Greek Bible and a Hebrew Bible with you to church. So, biblical language competency is the second thing to work on.

The third thing to work on, I suggest, is Bible background. Now, if you are serving the Lord in any capacity which involves study of the scriptures—preaching, teaching or Bible studies and such—you will need to spend time working through the particular passage for the next sermon, the next Bible study session, or whatever; and the special study for specific passages should get you into the commentaries and, perhaps occasionally, into a Bible encyclopedia or such, so that you will get some exposure to [the] historical cultural background of that particular passage. However, an important facet I think you need to work on is to develop, or be developing, your Bible background. To do this you need to try to work through materials that have a broader overview than just your specific passage. So it's helpful to get an overview so of ancient history, ancient culture, some of the other religions in the New Testament time or Old Testament times that will help you to understand the impact of the Old Testament and New Testament in their own times. Sometimes you will notice things in the text that you might not have otherwise noticed because you actually have this background and you say, "Say, that seems to resemble this," or that sort of thing.

This sort of a background is only going to come though fairly wide reading. For a number of years I kept a list of all the books I read starting about 1968, I suppose—that would be just after I started seminary—and this amounted to about fifty books a year, I think about over a hundred for about six of these years. I finally got side-tracked and gave up on it about twenty years ago, and I'm trying to get back into it now. My scheme was to try to read some of the primary sources. Obviously, I didn't try—well, not obviously. I did try to read Josephus in the Greek, which is pretty heavy going, but felt that the English for Josephus and the Dead Sea Scrolls and that sort of thing was good enough. It gives you the background, and you're not, after all, doing a doctoral program on one of these areas. So I read Josephus, Dead Sea Scrolls, Old Testament, New Testament, Apocrypha, Nag Hammadi Gnostic texts and some of the Rabbinic literature.

That's massive to try to read all of that. I was currently on Philo when I got hung up, so I have got a bookmark in my copy of Philo and haven't done anything with it for quite a few years now, I'm afraid. I also have read works on ancient history or encyclopedias of the Ancient Greek and Roman worlds and books on everyday life in Rome, ancient Greek warfare, and archeology and such. I was a New Testament professor so, obviously, that controlled some of the kinds of stuff I read. If you are a pastor or a counselor, obviously you're going to have to read in the pastoral matters, and counseling matters, and things of that sort, which I really did not do anything of. You really should not neglect reading in these broader areas as well because it will strengthen your understanding of the biblical world. After all, we do believe that the Bible is God's revelation to us, and we want to understand that as well as we can.

So those are three things you need to work on. There's a fourth one, which in some ways is more important than all of them, and that is what I call spiritual insight. We need to work on building our spiritual insight. You remember that Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 said that the most spectacular gifts are worthless without love, so even the most complete set of—what should we say—mental and bibliographic tools for interpreting the Bible are going to be counterproductive without a real spiritual life and without real spiritual insight. So if we don't know Jesus, all of our exegetical skills will only add to our condemnation in the end. If we do know Jesus, then we will grow in spiritual insight as we gain experience, and we gain experience through living through our own problems, and through helping other people with their problems, and those things. That will often cause us to see things in Scripture that we had not seen before, but are really there. So it's absolutely crucial that we have close communion with God and love him in order to do good exegesis. So that's some things we need to build on in trying to improve our interpretation of the Bible.

## Literary Genres

I want to move on then to talk a little bit about genres in the Synoptic Gospels. The word “genre” is a word that comes from French, and in French, as far as I know, the word just means “kind,” so it’s kind of a generic word. But when it moved over in English, it has become a technical word. Just like the word in Spanish “sombrero” just means “a hat,” but in English it means “a big floppy hat that Mexicans wear.” So, “genre,” in English literary studies stands for a kind of literature, a kind of writing or a kind of speaking. It might be as broad as a distinction between prose and poetry, or it may be as narrow as a particular kind of specialized poem such as a limerick, or a sonnet, or something of that sort. Well, to be a recognizable genre, we must construct some kind of list of features to distinguish it from other genres.

We are going to look at several common genres in the Synoptic Gospels here in the next lectures. In this course we are going to look at four different passages, and each of those represents a different genre. The one here will be kind of [a] general narrative, and we will look at a miracle account and a parable, and then we’re going to look at a controversy account, et cetera. At this point I usually have a little short class exercise and ask them, “What are some of the features of poetry?” The answer to that actually will depend upon what language you are talking about. Most of us who are in Bible studies have thought a fair bit about Hebrew poetry. Hebrew poetry, unlike English poetry, doesn’t always have rhyme, and we are not always sure about its meter. But it does always have a structure that we call parallelism in which succeeding lines are designed in such a way—they relate to each other in certain ways, whether they repeat the same thing or they add to it a little bit or do something the opposite of it. Looking at the other side of the coin, so to speak, would be features of Hebrew poetry that we might not see as commonly in English poetry. But English poetry and Hebrew poetry are

also characterized by a heavier use of figures of speech to kind of grab the iMagination, if you like. So we could make a list of the things that we should find in Hebrew poetry.

Suppose we try the genre of a sermon. What would be the characteristic of [a] sermon? Well, there are enough diverse types of sermons so that might be fairly hard. You could start with the definition of a sermon and say that a sermon is a talk given to the congregation of a church, or a synagogue, or something like that; that's intended to motivate them to right behavior, or right attitude, or something of that sort. That would be kind of a generic way of saying it. If you think about the classic sermon that starts out with some kind—I'm thinking of a fairly modern classic sermon—starts out with some kind of a story and then leaves off in the middle of it, and the conclusion picks up the end of the story. If you like, that's what's called in literary studies an *inclusio*. Then in the middle, at least in a classic sermon, it tended to make three points, and some people make two or four depending on the passage. After all, if you are trying not to interrupt the passage, you should stick with the structure of the passage and not get too carried away with how many sermon points you've got. Then they might vary on whether after each point you make the application of that point, or whether you save all the applications for a concluding section. In the old days a sermon would often end with a poem or something of that sort. That's rather rare today, I would think.

Another genre: how about a pun. What's a pun? It's some kind of joke, if you like. It's a joke that plays on two words that perhaps are alike in English or very similar in English. I remember one our physics professors at Duke told once, or maybe even twice, about an elderly couple and telling how their sons had got a ranch; and the elderly couple, the parents, called the ranch "A focus ranch." And somebody asked "Why'd they call it 'a focus ranch?'" They say "Well, this is where the sons raise meat." And you can see the triple pun in that, "sun" for the object in the sky and for their "sons." The "rays," for the sun's rays and from their

sons raising animals, and “meat” and “meet.” Well, I won’t beat you to death on that, but that’s an example.

### **Survey of Genres**

Well, we are going to look a little bit here at some of the genres we covered in class, in this course, and some that we don’t. First of all, the genre of narrative: it is a kind of generalized narrative. We’re going to look at the story of the wise men—the visit of the wise men in Matthew 2. And then I used to assign for a term paper one—they could choose out of the six or eight term paper topics—the walk to Emmaus after Jesus's Resurrection, which would be kind of a general narrative, if you like, in Luke 24.

And then we’re going to look at a miracle account, and the one we will look at in this course, in class, is the Gadarene Demoniac in Mark 5. That is a possible term paper topic. Another was the faith of the Centurion in Luke 7. A parable example is the one we do in class: the royal wedding feast in Mathew 22. For a term paper topic the students could choose, if they like, the wicked tenants/farmers in Mark 12. Or for a controversy account we’re going to look at the casting out of demons by Beelzebub in Luke 11' and for a term paper topic, picking grain on the Sabbath in Mark 2.

There are a number of other genres that occur in the Gospels with greater or lesser frequency that we don’t cover in class just because of limitations—discourse, for instance. What’s a discourse? Well, a person talking, but there’s no talking back and forth like there is in the dialogue. For instance, Jesus’ remarks in Mathew 6 of not worrying: don’t worry about your life, or about your food or clothing, or that sort of thing.

Another genre that occurs a number of times in the New Testament, and in the Gospels particularly, is symbolic action, or acted parables. There’s a number

of those in the gospels. I mention here three possibilities—there are probably eight or ten that you could suggest that there might be some argument about, but Jesus' cleansing the temple is both a real action but also symbolic in some way. It's found in Mathew 21 and parallels; or Jesus washing the disciples' feet in John 13; or Jesus' cursing the fig tree in Mark 11 and parallels. Those would be examples of symbolic actions.

How do you tell that they're symbolic actions? Well, that's the trick here. Unlike parables—usually with a parable the person tells you they are telling a parable—with a symbolic action they don't necessarily tell you that. So you have to watch out for some unusual action, and then something that seems in the context gives you some idea of what the symbolism might be. Certainly Jesus driving the money-changers out of the temple was unusual, if you like. “But the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple?” and “Who can abide the day of his coming?” in Malachi sounds to me like a pretty strong background for that; and Jesus' remarks about their misuse of the temple and such falls into that category.

A genre that only occurs twice in the New Testament, I think, but does occur a fair bit in the Old Testament is genealogy. We have one in Mathew and one in Luke, both for Jesus, and not identical. That's interesting as well. There's been a lot of discussion about that. My own guess is Luke's genealogy is probably Mary's line and Mathew's genealogy is Joseph's line. The passages don't tell us that. We'll come back and say a word about that, I think, when we come back and discuss the content of the Gospels briefly.

Another genre, which is pretty common, is called dialogue. That's where two people—usually just two—are talking back and forth. The temptation narrative in Matthew and Luke has Satan and Jesus speaking back and forth; or [take] Jesus' remarks in Matthew 8 to a couple of would-be followers of Jesus.

They say various things, and he speaks back to them. The rich young ruler in Mark 10 would fall in that category, too. So those are some samples of different genres that occur in the gospels.

### **Narrative Genre**

We want to concentrate here, for this session, on the narrative genre, so let's think a little bit about that before we go and actually look at a particular example of it. The first thing that we try to do is define the genre, if you like. How do we define narrative? Well, a narrative, pretty briefly, is a story, an account, or a tale of events. So it's relating a series of events. A narrative may be either factual or fictional, though I understand all of the biblical narratives to be factual unless somehow marked. For instance, narratives in parables do not need to be factual, and we've got some examples of that. The story that is told by Nathan to David about the rich man and the poor man with his ewe lamb, etc. is a fictional story. The one where the prophet tells Ahab about the soul of the prisoner who got away and pretends he has been wounded (well, he's actually been wounded but that was a fake wound, etc., if you like)—those are examples of that sort of thing. So it's not necessary for the narrative scripture that the narratives that occur in parables be non-fictional, if you like. But I would see all the other narratives in Scripture to have actually occurred, though a number of those have been rejected by one or another interpreter.

Narrative is a really broad genre, and that's something, perhaps, that I should have said before (Well, I did say it once, I think. I said a genre can be as broad as prose or poetry, or as narrow as the other). So a narrative is a very broad genre, usually a sub-class under prose, but not always; there are also poetic narratives. Song of Deborah and Barak, for instance, would be a narrative, and yet it's in poetry in Judges 5. Homer's *Iliad* is a narrative, but it's in poetry etc.

Milton's *Paradise Lost* is a narrative, but it's in poetry. However, narrative, at least in modern literature, is usually in prose.

Lots of other things are in prose, however, so how do we distinguish narrative from prayer? Well, that's fairly straightforward. Prayer is a declaration, speaking to God, if you like; something of that sort. In exposition you are explaining something; in dialogue there is a back and forth between two people (though, of course, dialogue can be part of a narrative); in discourse one person speaking, etc. All of these things: prayer, exposition, dialogue, discourse, might be included in a narrative, and occasionally they might even include a narrative in them. That would have to be a long dialogue, but maybe a short discourse could still have a narrative of some sort in it.

You could say, for instance, that Stephen's speech to the Sanhedrin is a discourse, if you like, but it is also a narrative, or it contains narrative within it. It is interspersed with comments on how the Israelites behaved with regard to Joseph, or Moses, or something of that sort. So the Gospels and Acts, in fact, are narratives; and yet they include these other genres as well.

We need to explore the components of a narrative because, after all, when you are making a definition of a genre, you need to give some features that characterize it. One important component of a narrative is actors, or characters: the persons who appear in the narrative, either causing the events or being affected by events. They're one feature seen in narrative. Then there are the events, or the actions, themselves: the occurrences described by the narratives. So, actors, events, scenes, where the events occur—time, country, region, town, indoors, outdoors, that sort of thing. And then a rather important feature of a narrative typically is plot, particularly of a narrative that has been, what should we say, carefully put together. A person giving an anecdote might not have much plot for it except that some humor, or incident occurred, or something. A plot is the inner-

connection, or development, of events in the narrative. Complex narrative will have more than one plot, so a novel will typically have a bunch of different plots interweaving in various ways. In the plot itself there is often a conflict of some sort; it can sometimes be divided then into sections where the tension is building up and where a climax is reached. Then the conflict is somehow resolved, and tension is released; and it might be able to say something of the consequences. Those features, at least, would be components of a narrative: actors, events, scenes, plot(s).

### **Types of Narratives**

What kind of narratives do we have in the Gospels? A rather helpful work on the literary features of the New Testament is a book by Leland Ryken (not sure if the last name is spelled correctly) called *Words of Life: A Literary Introduction of the New Testament*. Ryken later expanded that to cover the whole Bible, and the title of the expanded version is *Words of Delight*. He suggests the following types of narratives occur in the Gospels, and he gives names to them that are generic enough so you that you can find these kinds of narrative genres elsewhere in other works. The Annunciation, or nativity story, for instance—annunciation, or nativity story, is clearly important to the Gospels. It is an announcement that John is going to [be] born given to Elizabeth, [and] an announcement that Jesus is going to be born to Mary. Those would be somewhat unusual because they involve prophecy of some sort, and are both supernatural. Nativity stories need not involve the supernatural, but we have, what should we say, an unusual situation that John is born with his mother being as old as she is and then the virgin birth for Jesus. So those are quite unusual. Yet, you will still find in many ancient stories, or even in modern stories, somebody telling something about the birth of their character. In the Gospel annunciation-nativity stories emphasis is on the uniqueness of Jesus, historical validity of various things, supernatural occurrences, fulfillment of

prophecy, and perhaps excitement of one sort or another. You remember the excitement that occurs when Zechariah comes out of the temple and he can't speak anymore because the angel has struck him dumb for not believing what the angel had told him.

A second example would be calling, or vocation stories. These might be pretty characteristic in the Gospels. They're narratives of Jesus calling people. So we can think of Jesus's coming along the seashore and calling the disciples who had been working in the boats, etc. Obviously, those sort of things don't need to be limited to the Gospels where you're talking about some teacher or some leader gaining followers, and who might be calling them in some way or another. But in the features of the Gospel's calling and vocation stories, you'd look for things like: Who's called? What are the circumstances? What kind of call? What are they being called to? What kind of response did they make? So in some sense you might say you've got a calling story when Jesus speaks to this fellow and says, "Follow me," but the person says, "Let me go back and say goodbye to my family," or something like "Or bury my father," which probably means wait till he dies. Those are examples of a negative response, where a person does not follow Jesus, or at least doesn't at that point.

A third kind would be "recognition stories," narratives of people discovering who Jesus is. These, again, don't need to be limited to the Gospel. So, in the Robin Hood stories, for instance, there's a recognition story in which Robin and his men find out that this strange black knight turns out to be Richard the Lion Hearted—so, a recognition story. But, obviously it is a bigger deal in the Gospels because it's the Messiah, not just the king of England; so, narratives of people discovering who Jesus is. The kind of questions we'd think to ask of such a genre would be, "What kind of circumstances led to the recognition?" So, the woman: "This man told me all that I ever did—could he be the Messiah?" would be a sample of that sort. What did the person come to recognize about Jesus? You

remember Nathaniel and Jesus telling him, “I saw you when you were under the fig tree,” and he [Nathaniel] realizes then that what Philip had told him then is true, and such—recognition stories.

A fourth category would be witness stories: Jesus, or another character, testifies about who Jesus is, or what he has done, and what the evidence for this is. So, the remark about the woman of Samaria at the well would be categorized as a witness story with respect to her telling the villagers who Jesus is, or a healed person going out and telling who Jesus is. Jesus sends out the—well, we don’t actually get the story—but Jesus sends out the healed the demoniac in the Gadarene demoniac tale to go tell people in the Decapolis who/what Jesus is, who/what God had done for them, et cetera—witness stories.

Encounter stories are representative stories of how Jesus seeks others. They begin with his initiative, or perhaps their initiative, continue with Jesus making some claim on their lives, and end with their response: either acceptance or rejection. Here there are people coming to Jesus—think perhaps of Nicodemus encountering Jesus in John 3, or the woman at the well encountering Jesus in John 4. We already mentioned Nathaniel in John 1, et cetera. So John has a number of these for individuals. It is perhaps less common in the Synoptic Gospels; but still, Peter and the others following Jesus and gradually growing in their understanding of who he is, et cetera, would fall in that category.

Conflict or controversy stories are some of the most common stories in the Gospels. Jesus is the protagonist against an opposing person or group who are viewed as the antagonist, and you think about what kind of situation you’ve got there. Perhaps they’re attacking Jesus and you see how he defends himself, how he turns the thing to the offense, and how Jesus gets the advantage, and what lessons we can learn, et cetera. So, there are some very striking ones in regard to the

perfect trap the Pharisees set with the Herodians to get Jesus on the tax question and how he turns that around on them, if you like.

The seventh category is pronouncement stories, informed criticism. These are now called “saying stories.” They used to be called “apothems.” But some kind of event is connected with a very striking saying by Jesus. The one I just mentioned ends up with “Give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give back to God what belongs to God,” would be an example of actually, in this case, a conflict story ending with a pronouncement.

We’re going to discuss miracle stories in some detail under the genre “miracle story” as one of our exegesis passages. Leland Ryken suggests typical structure like this: first of all, a need is established, and so the narrator will usually say something about: this fellow had been lame for these many years, or since birth, or something like that; or this person had been demonized for many years or something. Jesus’ help is sought, but not always sought. Sometimes he volunteers it; for example, the fellow at the pool in Bethesda where he actually volunteers in some way there.

The demoniac comes running to Jesus, and we don’t know whether the demoniac, having heard from the demons who it is, comes running for help, or whether the demons come to attack and don’t really know exactly who it is. There is a lot of stuff we don’t know there. We’ll talk more about that whole incident.

The person in need, or a helper perhaps, presses faith or obedience in some way. So the four carrying the lame guy, break up the roof, and bring it down. Obviously, they express some kind of faith to go through all of that sort of thing. Jesus then performs the miracle, and then the characters respond to the miracle, or respond to Jesus or something—those are typical. The need: Jesus helps the person that expresses faith, or something of the sort. Jesus performs a miracle, and the characters respond to the miracle, etc. You don’t always see all of those, but that’s

a characteristic of [this] genre as well. There's usually a list of characteristics, and a particular incident needs to satisfy—let's say, the significant ones—a majority of them to be considered in that genre.

So a ninth category is passion stories: narratives of events surrounding the trial, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and, again, in external literature you can get passion stories of some sort. You think of the film—if I can come up with the name now—Braveheart: it ends with a passion story, if you like; the death of William Wallace, et cetera. But, obviously, the significance of Jesus' death puts all those others into the shade. In fact, it takes up then a much larger portion of the Gospels than would be characteristic, in general, of the death scene taking up in the biography of somebody else. So, the passion stories can be viewed as a whole section for each gospel, or you can subdivide them into the separate stories that make it [i.e., this genre] up as well.

And then Ryken mentions here as a tenth one: “hybrid stories,” and we've already indicated as we walk through that a bunch of these things are, in fact, combinations of two or even three of the particular other genres. So these are narratives that combine elements of the others; miracle stories which produce recognition; pronouncement stories which are encounters, et cetera, which fall in that kind of category. Well, that's a very, very quick tour of the narrative genre and a little bit on how to get organized for exegesis.

### **Exegesis of Matthew 2**

Now we're going to actually do the exegesis of a narrative, and that's the instance of the visit of the wise man in Matthew 2—the whole chapter actually, verses 1 through 23. In a class room situation I would have assigned them to have translated all this, and so we'd go around the class and point to various people and say, "Translate verse 1 for us," and then might have some comments from myself,

or various other people in the class, on whether this or that thing should be translated slightly differently and maybe some comment on the grammar here or there, and that sort of thing. Well, I'm not going to do all that right here, but this translation of the visit of the Wise Men is my own, and I'll here make a remark occasionally on this or that sort of thing. So, the text we're using here is the Greek New Testament by the United Bible Society (mine has a dictionary in the back of it), and I think this is probably the fourth addition—they've changed here or there over the years—and it has little headings that are constructed to be as reasonably neutral as they can be so they don't have a Baptist or Catholic, or something of that sort, of flavor to them. They describe basically what's coming.

So, the first section here starts out with the heading, "The Visit of the Wise Men," and my translation looks like this: "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, Magi from the East came to Jerusalem." A number of things might arise in that question. One would be, "What are Magi?" and we're going to come back and say a little bit about that. The dictionary, I have Bauer and Gingrich; I think it's Bauer, Gingrich and Danker, has [Magi] under *magos*. The first definition it gives is "*magos*" but then the parentheses: a Babylonian or Persian wise man and priest, expert in astrology, dream interpretation, etc. So that's kind of the quick one you get. You probably would want, with an unusual word like that, to investigate that a little bit further. That's the word I think that's translated in King James as "wise men," which is actually a good translation, but no single translation tells you everything you'd like to know.

I had a couple words down here from the Greek that I just wanted to have looked up, etc., but didn't particularly need to, and so I don't know that we'd really need to go into them. The Magi are from the East; and [I] looked up the word *anatole*. It's a word we get *Anatolia* from. For Greece, eastern regions are *Anatolia*, but it actually comes from the word meaning "rising," so it's the

direction the sun rises. So generically it is the east you're looking at. So it doesn't tell us anything specifically about just where they came from.

Well, we might mention Magi is kind of the Latin plural of the thing. It's *magos* and then *Magi* in Latin. The Greek of course is *magos* and *magoi*, but we get the word "Magician" from it, and it's used in the singular; in the New Testament Simon Magus is one of those kind of guys.

Well, verse 2: so they come from the East to Jerusalem saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star in the east and have come to bow down to him, or to come to worship him."

We've got a couple of things that are there of some interest in the passage. "In the east" could mean, "at its rising"; and not having time machines and not being there, that is a little uncertain." When we were in the east – we saw it," but we're not saying anything about which direction it was, or "We saw it at its rising," which then does put it somewhat in the east because of the way the earth rotates. The stars appear to rise in the east[, go] overhead and set in the west, and even the ones that are up here on the pole start at an eastern direction and come around to the west and then go down and back up again, etc. So we're not sure that this is telling us exactly where the star was or whether it's merely just telling us where they were or when they saw it.

"To bow down or worship him": that is ambiguous here, and not knowing enough of their own background, we don't know whether they felt they needed to worship him or whether they just needed to bow down. Although you get a little bit of a hint, I think, in the fact that these are guys that are coming from some distance, and why would somebody come from a great distance to bow down to somebody if he's just king of the Jews – they're not Jews – so there is, perhaps, a hint there that there is something more going on there.

Well, verse 3: “Now when King Herod heard this, he was disturbed and all Jerusalem with him.” That’s got a lot of background to it which we’ll have to unpack a little bit, but it tells us that this is King Herod and probably suggests that there might be some other Herods around by the time the writer was writing... There’s a debate on when Matthew was written, and we’ll deal with that actually in the next section of our course; but at this point there had only been one who was the king that by the time you get out to Josephus, late into Josephus’ career then you hit a second and third king Herod.

Verse 4: “He – Herod – gathered together all the chief priests and scribes of the people and inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.” And “Christ” is just the Greek translation of the Hebrew *meshiah*. We still use the two words separately Messiah and Christ, but they mean the same thing and they are a title of some sort. You can see that already in this passage: “And they [chief priests and scribes] said to him [Herod], ‘In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by means the prophet.’” And I’ll jump on to 6: “And you Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah, for from you will come forth a ruler who is to be shepherd of my people Israel.”

So there is the quotation; it’s a somewhat free quotation. The “by no means,” for instance, is rather interesting because the Hebrew says, “Though you are least,” or something of that sort. So I think we are getting at what Rabbinic scholars would call a *midrash*, interpretive reading, of the passage. Although Micah says that Bethlehem is least, if you like, the reader-interpreter is saying, “Well, if the Messiah’s going to come from there, it’s not least anymore,” so we’ve got something of that sort going on. That’s the quotation that comes out of Micah 5:2 and some commentators suggest that it’s had some influence from another passage as well I’m not sure Fields necessarily goes that way but leave it there.

Verse 7: “Then Herod secretly called the Magi and found out from them the exact time of the star’s appearance.” “Exact” is not a separate word in the text, but the verb there *ekribosen* – to ascertain – and it comes from *akribow*, which means something that is very specific, so actually “ascertained” does too! ... “certain” and “ascertain” ... so it gives the impression that he’d want to know “Can you give me a date on when this star first appeared?” or something of that sort.

Well, he calls them secretly, which means he doesn’t call them in while all the chief priests and the scribes are standing around. That’s a standard procedure among kings, actually, if you go back and look at the incidence surrounding just before the death of David when it looks like Adonijah is going to run off with the kingdom and Bathsheba comes in, gives a message to David of what’s going on. Then, apparently, she leaves and Nathan comes in and gives a message, and then David calls Bathsheba back in, etc. That’s fairly characteristic. When you look at the incidence in the rebellion of Absalom, Absalom and his counselors call in Ahithophel and say, “What do you think we should do?” Then, apparently, he goes; and Hushai is called in, and they ask him what he thinks, and they do tell him what the other guy recommended and ask: “Is that okay? What would you suggest?” So you get that fairly standard royal procedure. So you’re getting all the information and maybe your advisors...but here, secretly, probably not even his advisors are there.

Herod and the Magi, what’s that all about? Well, we find that out in verse 8. Herod’s sending them, the Magi, to Bethlehem. He said, “Go inquire carefully about the child; as soon as you find him, tell me so that I too can come and worship him.” Well, knowing Herod and seeing the sequel here, that’s obviously a lying remark, but he is going to kill the child if he can. There’s some background about Herod, but even knowing kings in general, most of them are not too enthusiastic about a successor who has been born who’s not their own kids. Well, that’s verse 8.

Verse 9: “So they”- and there’s a nice example of the definite article use of the personal pronoun-“So they, when they heard the king, went away. And behold, the star which they had seen in the east,” or “had seen it its rising,” still with the ambiguity “brought them out,” or “went before them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was.” This is an important passage in understanding what might be going on here in connection with the star of Bethlehem. We’ll come back and think about that. But the natural reading of it here is that from Jerusalem to Bethlehem they’re actually guided by the star, and since they don’t need the star to get to Bethlehem, it presumably guides them to the place in Bethlehem: the house, or whatever it is.

Verse 10: “Now when they saw the star, they rejoiced greatly.” It is hard to know how they would translate that “But they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy,” or something like that, is literally what it said. A very, very strong construction which sounds to me like they are not only really joyous, but perhaps it would be fair to say that they are, perhaps, surprised; certainly excited anyway.

Verse 11: “When they came into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother. They fell down and worshiped him, and opening their treasure chests they presented gifts to him: gold, frankincense and myrrh.” The word I translate “treasure chest” it is pretty generic: treasure box, a storeroom, that which is stored, or treasure. So they opened their treasure, whatever they carried the stuff in, they opened it. They obviously didn’t open any storerooms since they aren’t carrying storerooms around, but something else.

It’s helpful to look up what frankincense and myrrh are, because those are not really standard terms anymore. What we translate “frankincense” here is actually *libanon*, and Bauer and Gingrich tell us it’s a white resinous gum. It’s actually a fragrant smelling thing, so it’s something rather valuable. The name, as we have in English is French, probably indicating that the Crusaders, the Franks,

brought it back from the Crusades, or something of that sort. So even the white resinous gum is a little thin since it's incense of some sort, a sweet smelling incense. It's not the miniature charcoal cubes, or something that we typically see incense in today.

Myrrh, also a resinous gum (so both of them come from some kind of plants, the sap of some kind of plants) and Bauer and Gingrich add too that it's sometimes used in embalming; so perhaps a hint there as well.

Verse 12: "Since they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod; they departed by another route to their own country." So here we just get a quick statement; we don't get a narrative of this dream or anything, but apparently God intervened to tell them not to go back to Herod. So the result will be that Herod will not know which house to go to, and the wise men will not be tortured to find out; and Joseph and Mary and Jesus will have more time to get away as well.

The UBS Greek New Testament here gives another heading at this point: "The Flight to Egypt" for the next three verses. Verse 13: "Now after they had left, behold, an angel of the Lord" or "an angel from the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph, saying 'Arise, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt, and be there'" or "stay there until I tell you, for Herod is about to seek the child to kill Him."

Verse 14: "So he rose, took his child and his mother by night, and went away into Egypt." For those of you who are into Greek, "by night" is this genitive of kind of time, so *nuktos*, "by night," "during the night."

Verse 15: "And he was there until the death of Herod, so that the things spoken of by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled: 'Out of Egypt I have called my son'."

Here we see that they stay until the death of Herod. We get an example here of a euphemism used in Greek: the word is actually *telos*, “end of Herod;” “until Herod met his end” we might say in an English euphemism. Euphemisms, remember, are a way of saying something that sounds more pleasant than the thing actually is.

Alright, we’ve got a quotation there from Hosea 11:1—maybe I should say a word about it now because I don’t think that I do in my notes further on. If you look at that passage in Hosea, it’s about God bringing Israel out of Egypt; and you say, “What’s that got to do with Jesus?” Well, there are a couple things going on there. One, Matthew was drawing some parallels between Jesus and Israel, and probably picking up an Old Testament idea that the servant of the Lord--that whole Servant section of Isaiah 40-53...54, or whatever--is about the Servant of the Lord. Sometimes it’s clearly Israel, and sometimes it’s clearly not Israel. So the Messiah is the one who’s going to do what Israel, in principle, should have done in some sense: been the light to the nations and that sort of thing. So that’s going on.

But this isn’t just Matthew’s idea. Obviously, you can say it was Isaiah’s idea, or something in that sort, but it’s Jesus’ idea as well because in the temptation narrative, Jesus is quoting three times responding to Satan with Israel in the wilderness verses. So Jesus saw a parallel between his temptations in the wilderness and Israel’s temptation in the wilderness. Israel’s tempted in the wilderness and fails; Jesus tempted in the wilderness succeeds. Adam and Eve are tempted in the Garden, not the wilderness, and they failed; Jesus is tempted in the wilderness, not the Garden, but he succeeds. It’s an interesting interaction of various themes, if you like, that are carried out of the Old Testament into the New Testament.

### **Slaying of the Infants**

We come then to another section: 3 verses that the UBS labels “A slaying of the infants.” Verse 16: “Then Herod, seeing that he had been deceived by the Magi,” although the Magi weren’t deceiving him, but that’s his view of the matter, which obviously sees plots where they aren’t. But that’s a very good characterization of Herod. “He became very angry and he sent troops and killed all the children in Bethlehem and all its districts from two years old and lower, according to the time he had determined from the Magi.”

Couple of things in there of interest: “Became very angry,” a nice example of what we call the inceptive aorist, the aorist for the beginning of an action. So it’s just saying Herod was angry; when he sees, this he becomes angry, if you’d like. When we hear of Bethlehem and its districts, it reminds us of something that I had not known early on, and that is the way that the territories were divided up in Israel. Probably a very common ancient division is that villages and towns had territory around them. They were administered in one way or another; I remember a discussion of that in a book called *Archeology of Israel* by a couple Israeli archeologists, but I don’t remember details right now (it was a part of my library; I gave away when I retired). Anyway, “According to the time he determined from the Magi”; does that mean that the Magi told him the star appeared two years ago? Probably not. When we look at Herod’s character, we will see that he is one of these guys who doesn’t take chances. So if a son looks slightly dangerous, get rid of him. So, probably, it means it had been some significant fraction of the year, or maybe the full year, and he just made sure that he got rid of the children that were anywhere near that age.

Well, verse 17: “Then was fulfilled that which had been spoken through Jeremiah the prophet saying,” verse 18, ‘A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning. Rachel was crying for children; she won’t be comforted for they are no more.’”

So here we have another fulfillment quotation of Matthew, I don't think he is saying here that the incident described in Jeremiah 31 is explicitly about this but that we have some kind of big parallel situation going on here. Matthew uses "fulfilled" in several different ways, some of which would be for a literal fulfillment of a prediction and others, perhaps, of carrying a theme of some sort and showing how that is being carried out in the ministry of Jesus as well.

### **Return from Egypt**

One last section, then, on these verses 19- 23, and that is the return from Egypt. "After Herod had died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt saying, 'Arise take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel for those seeking the life of the child have died.'" "Those seeking the life" is a little interesting. It's a plural; it's not just Herod, but Herod and his henchmen, who would not want to see some successor that would put their position in danger, if you like, is probably the idea there. It's just a little insight that's not developed further. So, we've got this appearing of the angel in a dream to, apparently, the wise men. I don't think we're told exactly how that works, and then a couple times here he tells Joseph to go back to the land of Israel. "So he rose and took the child and his mother and entered the land of Israel." So, the message was apparently to go back to that territory.

Verse 22: "When he heard that Archelaus reined over Judea in place of Herod his father, he feared to go there." So you get the impression that Joseph knew something of Archelaus, and it wasn't good. That fits with information from Josephus as well. Well, in fact, Archelaus wasn't given the kingship by Augustus because of the complaints against him. He was allowed to be an Ethnarch with a trial period. He failed the trial period afterwards but it lasts about 10 years perhaps. So Joseph apparently realizes that Archelaus has some of the bad traits of his father Herod, and so it's not safe to go there. "Being warned in a dream, he

departed to the districts of Galilee.” So, he realizes that Galilee was relatively safe, and indeed Herod Antipas, another of the sons of Herod who was apparently of a milder character, though he will eventually kill John the Baptist, but if you remember even if you look at that incident that that wasn’t exactly his initiative. So, apparently, Joseph felt that was a safer move, and that’s where he goes.

Verse 23: “And he came and settled in a town called Nazareth so that the words spoken by the prophets were fulfilled that ‘He should be called a Nazarene.’” So that’s an interesting remark. It doesn’t give us an exact quote, and my guess is that this is an allusion to the branch passages, as one of the Hebrew words for branch is *netzor*. So he goes to a city, a *netzor* city, and then he can be called a *netzorene*. But it is interesting that twice in Isaiah, Isaiah 11:1 and 53:2, and in Zechariah 6:12, the Messiah is called “the branch.” It’s not always *netzor* in all three of those passages, but in at least one of them it is.

### **Narrative Features of Matthew 2**

So that’s a quick tour. We are going to come back and try and look at some of the passages, but first let’s look at some of the narrative features of the passage. It’s a narrative, so that means it’s got characters, events, scenes, and plots. Characters, pretty straight forward: Joseph, Mary, Jesus. But the only person who acts independently in the way it’s narrated is Joseph. Mary and Jesus kind of just tag along on that. Then there is the Magi, but the Magi all act as a group. Again, this is a choice in the narrator. So we don’t find out whether they are named Balthazar and Melchior etc. as the traditions say, but we also didn’t find how many there are for that matter. Herod, the king, certainly acts. Then there are the Jewish religious leaders, and again for the narrator they just act as a group; and then there’s the angel of the Lord. So that’s basically what we’ve got in the way of characters here.

Events, well I can give a whole string of events without quite retelling the whole story. First, the Magi arrive in Jerusalem asking about the newborn king whose star they've seen. Second event: Herod is disturbed, and so were those around him. Third, Herod gets information from the religious leaders. Fourth, Herod has a private interview with the Magi pretending like he wants to worship the child. Next, the Magi see the star, rejoice, and go to the child. Then, the Magi worship the child, give gifts, and then are warned in a dream, and the Magi return to their own land rather than to Herod. So, presumably, they go directly across the Jordan or even going some other out-of-the-way direction so they don't get too close to where Herod is. Also warned in a dream, Joseph flees to Egypt with Mary and Jesus. Herod soon realizes the Magi are not coming back. He apparently didn't send spies after them or anything because, apparently, he felt he had succeeded in deceiving them. He becomes furious and sends soldiers to kill the children. Then, after Herod's death, Joseph is instructed to return to Israel with Mary and Jesus, settling in Galilee.

The scenes, what we might say, there's the East; but in fact there is nothing narrated going on there, so Jerusalem is the first scene. Bethlehem is the second scene, Egypt the third scene, but there is really not much said about what's going on in Egypt. Then Galilee is sort of mentioned again at the end, but not really narrated. So, I'd really say Jerusalem and Bethlehem are the main scenes, and Egypt is mentioned a little bit. and then Galilee hardly at all.

Plots: It's often a little tricky to tell what all the plots are. Here's what I get. A threat to kill Jesus is averted. Gentiles seek, find and worship Jesus. And question: Is the writer intentionally setting that in contrast to the Jewish leaders? After they had heard, well, what had they heard? Certainly they had heard something about the Magi in town. That must have gotten around in order to the information to get to Herod and for them to come in. They probably aren't told a whole lot yet besides that, but still, perhaps, there is some contrast there. Herod to

protect his throne tries to kill Jesus. That's a pretty clear plot. Then God uses the events and action of the opponents to accomplish his purpose.

Action: Herod gets all the Jews for Jesus into Egypt. Death, however, brings them back, etc. so we see some of that going on as well.

### **Type of Narrative?**

What type of narrative are we looking at here if we think in terms of Leland Ryken's categories? Well, it's obviously [a] nativity story; and an encounter story between the Magi and Jesus. Jesus doesn't do anything, but it does appear to be something like that. It's certainly a conflict story, but it's primarily a conflict between Herod and God. You can certainly see from the angel that this is God at work, and it's not the cleverness of the Magi, or of Joseph, or something of that sort.

### **Study Sheet Questions**

There are some items needing clarification in the passage in order to see clearly what's going on, and I put these out as kind of a little study sheet for the students to try and fill out while they were doing their translation and such, and then they brought them back and we discussed them. But here are the questions I hit on the study sheet:

Who are the Magi? How many Magi visited Jesus? Okay, well then we go into a little discussion. The term *magoi* is the plural for *magos*, Latin, or *magoi*, Greek. It's a [word] used commonly in Greco-Roman literature for magicians. Elsewhere in the New Testament it's used for Elymus, the sorcerer in Acts 13:6-8.

You remember the guy in Cyprus that tries to lead Sergius Paulus against Paul and Silas. A cognate verb *maguo* is used of Simon in Acts 8:9. So although he's traditionally called Simon Magus, he's actually not called that in Acts, but the *mageuo* there is warrant for that obviously. In earlier usage, pre-Greco-Roman, it referred to Persian and Babylonian wise men or priests, often with the ability to interpret dreams or the stars.

We're going to mention a little later on in our course that a Hebrew text of Matthew has been discovered from [a] medieval manuscript, and there's warrant to believe that it is ancient and may even be a somewhat poorly transmitted copy of Matthew's original Gospel in Hebrew. Well, I'll say a bit about that when we get there so I'm not going to say too more about it here. I bring it up here because it translates *magoi* the first time it occurs (I don't know if it translates or not), [and] the term it gives is "seers of the stars," and that's what we would call astrologers.

The number of Magi who visited Jesus is not given in the Bible. It might perfectly well have been three, the traditional number, but some have suggested that's maybe just based on the three gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. We don't know; we were not there.

The second question on this hand out sheet: What was the star? What phenomena has been suggested? What data of the passage must each suggestion be tested against to see if it fits? Well, we're going to make an attempt to identify the star in a little bit here.

My next section in the notes is the star of Bethlehem. Numerous suggestions have been made over the ages, including a comet: Halley's Comet has been suggested; a supernova, which is a star that collapses and suddenly becomes as bright as it's whole galaxy, if you like; a conjunction of planets when in the sky two planets appear to be very close together; an angel, something like the pillar of

fire that guided the Israelites in the wilderness, though perhaps not shaped that way; or merely the invention of Matthew or his source—that’s even been suggested by a fairly Evangelical author. Well, according to Matthew, it seems that the star appears to the Magi in the east, but then apparently disappears because otherwise why would they come to Jerusalem to inquire? If it’s guiding them in some way, you choose to follow it. Presumably, [it] would take them all the way. But it’s more likely that the star tells them something and that [it] tells them to go to Jerusalem. It then appears after they leave Herod, and it somehow guides them to the right spot. So that’s the information we’ve got there.

Third question: Why do you suppose Herod was upset? What do we know about him from other ancient sources that fit this picture? Well, the average person doesn’t have these ancient sources, so usually you look in a commentary, or a Bible encyclopedia, or something of that sort to find out. He was presumably upset by the threat a newborn king would pose to his own rule, and especially to that of his descendants. He’s old enough that a child just born is not going to be ruling while he’s still alive, but he is more concerned with his descendants. I recall the reaction of Athaliah to finding out that that Joash was still alive. That Athaliah was the Queen mother who had put to death all these descendants of her son, and one of them had been snuck away and such, and when she finds out about the treason, she kills all these people to get her throne. It’s a pot calling a “kettle black,” or something like that. So we find that’s presumed. We do know from Josephus, in *Antiquity* 16:11 and 17:7, that Herod killed three of his own sons, and that was when he thought they were in a hurry to succeed him. So one of the sons had planted rumors about the other two sons, that they were in a hurry to rule and got them killed, and then it backfired on him a few years later and he got killed. Herod, we also know from Josephus, was fearful there would be a great celebration in his death. So he knew he was not popular and he said, “I know what I’m going to do so that there’s going to be mourning at my death.” So he hid a

number of the Jewish leaders collected into a stadium with the orders that when he died, the soldiers were to put them all to death. The people who were just below Herod realized when he had died that they would have to face the music if all these people were put to death. Herod was gone, and he faced it with God, but they would have to face it here on earth, and so they quietly dismissed the soldiers, and there was great celebration at the death of Herod the Great.

Okay, the Star of Bethlehem: what was the star of Bethlehem? Well, something very interesting has happened in the last twenty years, that is with the development of electronic computers. Late in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a discovery was made, which provides a very strong candidate for the star of Jerusalem. I've got a narrated PowerPoint talk on this called "The Star of Bethlehem, What was it?" on our IBRI website. So if you go to [www.ibri.org](http://www.ibri.org), we've got a little Google engine up at the top, and you do "A Star of Bethlehem" search on it, it will turn it up for you.

And there's also a video out called "The Star of Bethlehem," produced by Stephen Vidano, (and I don't know who he is, but it is part of the advertisement, so I think he's pretty well known) presented by Frederick Larson, and you can find out about that under [www.bethlehemstar.net](http://www.bethlehemstar.net). It's quite good, although it doesn't do it quite the way I do, but it's the same event that they see there. They use a rather sophisticated program on the computer, the Plantarium program, which I eventually got, to let you look at the events surrounding this particular thing.

It's a close conjunction; well let me see; I'll describe it here. This candidate is a series of planetary conjunctions occurring in the years 3 and 2 BC, which would have told the Magi that a king had been born to the Jews. The most striking of these conjunctions was between Jupiter and Venus and the constellation Leo, on June 17, 2 BC. It was so close that the two planets would have appeared as a single star of unusual brightness to the naked eye. When you run it on this Plantarium program, it appears to be a single star, and then you can zoom in on the program, and you get out there and you can actually see the two and they're right

out there like that. They're very, very close together. If you do the calculation, it is very rare. Such a close conjunction to have appeared as a single star would have occurred only once in the whole history of human civilization. So, it is a very rare event. This spectacular enough to have brought the Magi hundreds of miles to see what was happening. It left a very impressive record, if you like, on what we might call the astrophysics of the solar system. That is, you can actually run the calculations backward there, complex and long, etc., so you need computers, and that's why all this finally got done with computers. So, [an] impressive record in the astrophysics of the solar system that would be noticed once humans had developed sufficient computing power to do the necessary calculations, but no one would have ever looked were it not for the Matthew record of it.

So, back in the 1960s, a fellow cranked out computer calculations. This was for ancient historians in the ancient world that gave you the position of the sun, the moon, and the major planets from 600 BC to 600 AD in two volumes. Then a fellow, who was an amateur astronomer and who later became a writer for *Sky and Telescope*, went through all of these looking for close conjunctions around the time of the birth of Jesus when he found this thing. Since then we've got all these computers, and you can actually visualize it on your screen and everything, which they were just looking through tables of position information to do that sort of thing. So no one would have ever looked for this record had not Matthew left us his account. I think its strong evidence of the historical reliability of Matthews's gospel. It's rather interesting that it came just about the time Robert Gundry was saying "no, this is an invented story that was devised from the visit of the shepherds, etc." Well that's the star of Bethlehem.

I have a couple other headings down here before we stop our discussion here. Matthews's purpose in narrating, it [the heading] says: Why do you suppose Matthew did that? Well, obviously it's a nativity story. The reaction of the Gentile Magi, even though pagans coming to the birth of Jesus, is certainly a contrast with that of King Herod. It also appears to contrast the reaction to the Jewish

leaderships in Jerusalem, though they may well have felt it was way too dangerous to follow up something like this given Herod's growing jealousy and irrationality near the end of his life. So there may be some mitigating circumstances for them. Though Matthew's Gospel is the most Jewish of the four gospels, it includes this incident, and the great commission to take the message of Jesus to all nations. Perhaps under the inspiration of the Spirit, Matthew is hinting that the gospel will receive a better reception among the Gentiles than among the Jews, which wouldn't have been obvious at that time, but is now very obvious at this time.

Last question here I suppose is how would you preach or teach a Bible study on this passage? Well, like many passages of this length, anyway—a whole chapter—there are number of emphases that could be made here, depending on your audience, depending on what strikes you at the moment, if you like. There's certainly that element in all of our preaching and teaching. All of these particular elements that I suggest here are present in the passage.

One, in spite of the fact that a number of commentators have doubted or dismissed the historicity of the visit of the Magi or the end of the star, it appears that God has provided a striking proof by means of computer reconstructions of the event; and that,, I think, is exciting enough. I know one of my friends, John Studenroth, has a copy of this video [by Vidano], and he has been showing it around to a lot of people, and I think that's a good movie, frankly.

Secondly, the incident pictures God reaching out to the Gentiles, even though they are, what should we say, ensnared in idolatry and false religion. It seems to me that God has even humbled himself to speak to them in a language they understand. A number of Christians I've spoken to struggle with this because it is astrology; well it's sort of astrology, but God is speaking to them in a language they understand. He doesn't speak to everybody in Hebrew; he reaches out and has the New Testament written in this pagan language Greek, and then translated to a pagan language Latin; and even more pagan languages up in northern Europe, etc. This need not be seen as a recommendation of God for astrology, any more than

Jesus consorting with the tax collectors and sinners as a recommendation for the lifestyle. You go where they are, if you like,; and [if] you say we don't have to go, well, actually we have to go where they are. Jesus and God didn't have to go where they are, but they chose to because of their mercy. We also see here, and this is a characteristic feature of the Gospels, a mixture of responses to Jesus, an important theme in all the Gospels: Jesus came to his own creation, came to his own people, and he was rejected by many, even most, yet some did receive him, and they in turn received eternal life.

Well, that's our discussion of introduction to exegesis, and looking at the exegesis of what we might call a generic narrative passage. So, we'll see you all for the next episode here in the Synoptic Gospels.

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## **Dr. Robert C. Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Lecture 4**

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### **Date and Authorship**

#### **Review and Preview**

We are continuing our Synoptic Gospels course here. We have so far looked at three major topics here: the historical Jesus, the Jewish background, and introduction of Jesus and narratives with the samples of the visit of the wise men. We are ready to go on to section four now: authorship and date of the Synoptic Gospels. And we will also throw in here at the end characteristics of the Synoptic Gospels as well. We want to sketch the historical evidence for the Synoptic Gospels being written by their traditional authors, Matthew, Mark and Luke, and all before 70 AD. We suggest that Matthew was written first, also traditional, [but] that the order of Mark and Luke is uncertain. Traditionally, Mark is next, though we favor Luke in the late 50s and Mark in the early 60s, shortly after Matthew was translated into Greek.

So let's go have a look at these things. We will start with the authorship of the Synoptics and go through each one of those and look first at internal evidence then at external evidence, and then we will come back up to date.

#### **Authorship of the Synoptics: Matthew**

So, authorship of the Synoptics: Matthew's authorship. Internal evidence, well except for the title, (and we, by the way, do not have a copy of Matthew with any other person listed in the title) the text is anonymous; that is, the writer never indicates when he is alluding to himself in an identifiable manner. We don't know if the title was put on the autograph by the author or not. If you are familiar with the titles, we will mention them now and again. The titles of the King James are: the Gospel of Saint Matthew, Gospel of Saint Mark, or Gospel according to Saint

Matthew, Gospel according to Saint Mark, etc. The earliest titles we have from the papyri are: The Gospel according to Matthew, The Gospel according to Mark, and The Gospel according to Luke. In the earliest parchments some of those are shortened even to just “according to,” where “Gospel” is understood. Given that Matthew wrote it, it’s interesting that we are still on the internal evidence.

It’s interesting that in his apostle list, Matthew 10: 2-4, he calls himself a tax collector, which was not exactly a popular profession in New Testament Palestine. The tax collectors have never been super popular with the tax payers anyway, anytime in history, but in the Roman Empire where you had areas that had been conquered in one way or another—although Palestine at this point was not too fiercely conquered—the inhabitants did not appreciate paying taxes to Rome. The Roman collection method at this point led to a great deal of corruption with over collecting and things of that sort. So that tax collectors were viewed as traitors and crooks and various other sorts of things. The Mark, Luke and Acts apostle lists omit this detail about Matthew being a tax collector. This perhaps suggests humility in Matthew and may also suggest a probable reason for all the Gospels being anonymous, namely, to keep the focus on Jesus. That’s all we know about internal evidence of the Gospel [of] Matthew. So consistently the titles of all the Gospels traditionally have these particular names.

External evidence: we are going to walk through the naming [of] various writers and saying a little bit about them as well. The earliest writer we’ve got that makes a statement of this sort is a fellow named Papias, and he’s writing perhaps around 130 AD. In his work, *The Exposition of the Oracles, the Lord*, we have this remark: “Then Matthew wrote the oracles in the Hebrew dialect, but everyone interpreted them as he was able.” The term “the oracles” is the Greek *ta logia* and is rather regularly used for “revelations from God”; so it is a rather strong term. “In the Hebrew dialect”: the word “dialect” is the actual word we get our word from, *dialecto*. There is a possible range of meanings of it, but the Hebrew Language is certainly within that range. The original of Papias’ *The Exposition of*

*the Oracles[of] the Lord* is not extant. The extracts of it are sighted by several ancient and medieval authors, and the whole work was apparently still extant in the Middle Ages. Our citation comes from Eusebius' *Church History* written about 325, give or take a bit, [in] Book 3, chapter 39, section 16.

What's meant here by the oracles: was this "The Gospel"? Liberals, or those who hold the two document theory—we'll look at that later in our discussion of the synoptic problem—the oracles are the Q source, and evangelicals have often said the same thing as well. However, Papias later uses "oracle" to refer to Mark. Everyone agrees that he is referring to the Gospel there. Irenaeus gives the same tradition regarding its origin, but explicitly identifies as the Gospel Matthew.

What is meant by the Hebrew dialect? This could refer to [the] Hebrew or Aramaic language, which was also called "Hebrew" in antiquity. This would imply that the original Matthew was in Hebrew or Aramaic and was translated later into Greek.

Some take dialect to mean Greek written in the Hebraistic style. This theory does not fit Papias' comment well, as it is hard to see how a simple stylistic difference would make Matthew so difficult to interpret. The idea of a language foreign to a Greek audience is more in keeping with Papias' remark. Recently, George Howard at the University of Georgia has argued that a rather poorly preserved text of the original Hebrew of Matthew has come down to us in a medieval, Jewish polemical, anti-Christian text called "Evan Bohan" (see George Howard's work, *The Gospel of Matthew according to a Primitive Hebrew Text*, published by Mercer University Press in 1987).

Irenaeus is our next author that we hear from in this regard. He is writing about maybe 50 years after Papias, around 180 AD, and [in] his work *Against Heresies* he says, "Now Matthew published also a book of the Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching the gospel in Rome and founding the church." This comes from *Against Heresies*, Book 3, chapter 1, section 2, which survives us only in the Latin, [for] the whole of the

*Against Heresies*, but pieces are quoted here and there; and the Greek of Irenaeus is quoted [by] Eusebius [in] *Church History*, Book 5, chapter 2, section 8.

Note that Irenaeus calls Matthew's work a "Gospel" and puts it in the Hebrew dialect and gives it a date: "while Peter and Paul were in Rome." We know Paul was in Rome in the early 60s A.D, and so presumably that is the time period being referred to.

A third witness to the authorship of Matthew is that of Pantinus, writing about the same time as Irenaeus, so around 180 AD. We have his information only indirectly in Eusebius. Eusebius says in *Church History*, (book 5, chapter 10, section 3) [that] "Pantinus also was one of them and is said to have gone to India, where the story goes that he found the Gospel according to Matthew which had preceded his arrival among certain people there that have learned of Christ, when Bartholomew, one of the Apostles, had preached to them and that he had left the writing of Matthew in Hebrew letters, which was also preserved to the time indicated." Pantinus was a Christian from Alexandria, Egypt, who was head of the catechetical school there ahead of Clement and Origen. Notice this is indirect information: "The story goes that," so I don't know what to make of that. It is not nearly as strong as the others. Pantinus notes that Matthew is written in Hebrew letters; that could still be Aramaic or Hebrew, but couldn't very well be Greek. The text is said to have been preserved still as of the late second century. The remark about India is not far-fetched, as there was travel between India and the Roman world at this time.

Our fourth testimony in this regard is Clement of Alexandria. He was writing about twenty years later, around 200 AD. Clement was head of the Catechetical School after Pantinus. Catechetical School doesn't tell you a whole lot about what this organization was, but we don't have an exactly equivalent term. Catechetical school sounds like a Sunday school class and a church. Well, it was kind of partly that, but it was also what we might call a seminary, so it really covered a whole range of studies for Christians who were from the early new

converts up to fairly advanced. Clement of Alexandria was head of [the] Catechetical School after Pantinus. He left Alexandria during the persecution in 203 and then died sometime between 210 and 217 AD.

Here's Clement's quote. This again is a citation by Eusebius, "again in the same books and is referring to Clement's outlines. Clement gives a tradition of the early presbyters concerning the order of the Gospels in the following manner. He said that those Gospels which contained the genealogies were written first, but the Gospel according to Mark had this occasion." What have we got there? It is the tradition of the presbyters. So Clement means that the information he has comes from leaders ahead of his time, so that would presumably go back to Pantinus or so, or maybe earlier than that. He explicitly states that Matthew and Luke were written first, so even before Mark. That's going to be actually the suggested order we line up with here when we pull everything together.

A fifth witness regarding the Gospel of Matthew is Origen, and he overlaps Clement very slightly, but is writing perhaps here around 240 AD, so a full generation afterwards. Origen was Clement's successor in Egypt. He later went to Caesarea after some disagreements with the officials in the church in Alexandria. There he built up a large library, which we think was the largest Christian library in antiquity, which was eventually inherited by Eusebius; so [it] became the basis for a great deal of his material in church history. In Origen's *Commentary on Matthew*, Origen says this: (again this is Eusebius citing Origen. It is third person.) "In the first of the books in the Gospel according to Matthew observing the ecclesiastical canon, he [that is Origen] testifies that he knows only four Gospels, writing somewhat as follows, as he has learned by tradition concerning the four Gospels, which alone are undisputed in the church of God under heaven, that first there was written was the Gospel according to Matthew, the onetime Publican, but afterwards an apostle of Jesus Christ who published it in the Hebrew language [and here uses Gramicon letters] for those from Judaism who believed." I will

come back and quote more of Origen's statements when we get to Mark, Luke and John, etc.

Question about the order here: Is Origen giving Chronological order here? "It is the first of the books," says Eusebius, "observing the ecclesiastical canon." So is this first written chronologically, or first written in canonical order? I don't know. Language there translated his letters, as I said Gramicon, and this is clearly the same dialect. Well, that is the five earliest writers, if you like.

The next two witnesses are important more for their access to written documents, which have not survived today, than they are likely to have access to reliable oral tradition; already by Origen we're out 200 years after the ministry of Jesus.

Eusebius is the major historian of the ancient church, and Jerome is one of his best scholars, so six [i.e., the sixth witness] is a testimony here from Caesarea, writing about 325, that we are now 300 years out of the ministry of Jesus. Eusebius here was bishop of Caesarea. If you remember, that is over on the Palestine coast, and this is after the end of the Roman persecution. So this had not been a Jewish territory for a long time now. But he had access to the library of Origen. Eusebius says in his *Church History* (Book 3, chapter 24, sections 5 and 6): "Yet of all the disciples of the Lord, only Matthew and John have left us memoirs, and they as it is reported had recourse to writing only under the pressure of necessity. From Matthew, who preached earlier to Hebrews when he was about to go to others also, committed his Gospel to writing in his native tongue, compensated for his writing as a lack of his presence to those from whom he went away."

One interesting comment in here is the use of the term "memoirs." "Only the disciples Matthew and John left us memoirs." It is an ancient genre, a genre for famous people thinking over events in their own lives and writing them up. Matthew and John, he says according to his quotation here, had not planned to write, but when they saw the need arise as they were leaving Palestine, they did so.

Now we move to Jerome, and he's writing another couple generations after Eusebius, about 400, in his *Lives of Illustrious Men*. Matthew was the fifth of the illustrious men. So this is *The Lives of Illustrious Men* 5. "Matthew, who is also called Levi and who changed from a publican [tax collector] to an apostle, was the first one in Judea to write a gospel of Christ in Hebrew letters and words for those who from the circumcision who believed, who translated afterward into Greek is not sufficiently certain."

So that is kind of quick tour of the seven testimonies, and we have no contradictory testimonies to these from antiquity, and they allow us to give the summary on the authorship of Matthew. First, that Matthew wrote the Gospel ascribed to him is the unanimous opinion of tradition, but perhaps not independently of the titles on the extant manuscripts. This is consistent with the title and content of the first Gospel. No other names are associated with it. The Early church knew of fake gospels and rejected them.

Second, Matthew's Gospel was the first written is also given several times in the tradition. This is frequently disputed today as most liberals and many conservatives think Matthew's Gospel uses Mark.

Third, Matthew's Gospel was written in Hebrew, or perhaps Aramaic, is a regular feature of the tradition. This too is often disputed today because the extant Greek Gospel does not look like translation Greek from a Semitic language. By "translation Greek" we mean a translation in which a lot of the Hebrew syntax and vocabulary range is carried over into Greek. The Septuagint, for example, is translation Greek in much of its text, though it varies from book to book in that regard, and, of course, it could be that the translation Greek tried to give it in a more fluent Greek style. Some of the Old Testament translations into Greek were concerned about style, for instance Symmachus and Theodocian used a Greek style, whereas Aquila gave very literal translation Greek even more so than the Septuagint, which is a kind of intermediate between those. If we try to think of English examples, the NASB is something like "translation English" and, of

course, the English of an interlinear is even more like translation English, whereas the NIV or such is a good English style.

Who made the translation? Well, we don't know. Perhaps Matthew made a free translation at a later time. We don't know for sure if it was a translation, although I think the testimony we looked at points that way, nor who made it. How much effect on inspiration would it have if Matthew, as we have it, was a translation? Well, of course, no problem if Matthew translated it. We perhaps would be more concerned if it was done by somebody besides an Apostle or an Apostle's trusted associate. After all, Mark and Luke are responsible for two of the Gospels. However, the church has been without the Bible for long periods of church history. The western church had only Latin through the Middle Ages, and even today most Americans don't know what the biblical language is at all. Most Christians through much of history have not had the Bible and the original languages.

What languages were used in Palestine at New Testament times? Well Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek were all used in the Bar Kokhba materials. You remember Bar Kokhba is the one who led the Rebellion of 132-135AD in our Jewish backgrounds. And there were Bar Kokhba materials that have been found recently in some of the caves there in Israel. Latin, Greek and Hebrew, or Aramaic, were used in the sign over the cross. We don't know how many people were multilingual. Since several of Jesus' New Testament statements are in transliterated Aramaic: *eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani, talitha cum* and such. This was probably Jesus's native language.

### **Mark's Authorship**

Well, that's a fast tour of the authorship of Matthew. Look secondly at Mark's authorship—internal evidence like Matthew—except for the book title Mark is anonymous in its text. Some have suggested that the style seems to fit the personality of Peter, and we'll see in a moment there's a tradition that Peter is a

source of Mark's gospel. So, yes I think it was Westcott that suggested that the style of Peter is impressionable rather than reflective, emotional rather than logical, and gives many details including Jesus's emotions and looks and gestures, Peter's own thoughts, and this would suggest a close contact with Peter. But Luke 9:33 also gives Peter's response at the transfiguration, so that's not quite unique to the Gospel of Mark. The outline of Mark is close to that of Peter's talk at Cornelius's house in Acts 10. Both start with John's baptism rather than Jesus's birth or preexistence like the other Gospels.

The standpoint of the narrative of Mark is consistent with Peter as author. What do we mean by the standpoint of the narrative? Well, we don't mean that the author refers to himself in the first person, rather that he structures the narrative so that a reader tends to identify with him or his group, and we see that rather like the way the birth narratives in Matthew and Luke seem to be written from Joseph's or Mary's view point. To take a modern sample, if you've read the Harry Potter series, with only a few exceptions, they are all written from the standpoint of Harry. That is, the reader knows what Harry knows but doesn't know what Dumbledore knows or what any of the other characters, Hermione, knows, or something of that sort, unless they say something to Harry, and then the reader knows it. So that would be kind of what's going on in that direction. For example, if we compare Mark 5:37 and Luke 9:23, raising Jairus's daughter, Matthew tells little of what happened in the house. Mark gives much more detail: gives the age of the girl, Jesus' remark to give her some food, and the people put out of the room. This is consistent with the idea that Matthew remains outside and got a few details later, while Peter went in and saw all the action, which is, in fact, what we are told happened.

Another item that we can probably put under external evidence that might relate to authorship is Mark 14:51: the young man that loses his sheet at the arrest of Jesus. That makes the best sense as a brief sketch of Mark himself. [This] makes best sense as a brief sketch of Mark himself, otherwise it's strange to

introduce someone with no explanation, especially when they have no connection with the narrative. I was thinking of Alfred Hitchcock movies where he always has a little vignette of himself stuck in the movie somewhere. You're inside a store or something, and there's kind of a pan across to the front window, and here's this guy looking in the window, and then he wanders away or something like that. [That] would be an example of what we perhaps have in mind here. So that's the internal evidence regarding Mark in authorship. It looks like it might reflect Peter's personality, and then maybe this little sketch might be Mark himself.

External evidence for the authorship of Mark: we've got an even more extensive statement by Papias than we did for Matthew. Papias is writing about 130 AD, and he says this: "And this the Presbyter used to say: Mark indeed, since he was the interpreter of Peter, wrote accurately, but not in order the things either said or done by the LORD, as much as he remembered. For he neither heard the LORD nor followed him, but afterwards, as I've said, Peter, who fitted his discourses to the needs of his hearers, but not as if making a narrative of the LORD's sayings. Consequently, Mark is writing some things just as he remembered [and] erred in nothing. For he was careful of one thing—not to omit anything of the things he had heard, nor to falsify anything in them." That's *Expositions of the Oracles of the LORD* here cited from Eusebius' *Church History*; Book 3, chapter 39, section 15. This is the most complete statement from Papias regarding any Gospel. The brackets I have in my printed text here, I have after Presbyter, "[apostle John?]" and "the things either said or done by the LORD as much as he" and then in brackets "[Peter, Mark remembered]" etc... are either explanatory material added by the translator to clarify statements, or they're my comments. Papias is citing information which goes back before him. The Presbyter or Elder is most likely the author of 2nd and 3rd John who calls himself The Elder. There's some argument over who that is, but my guess is it's the apostle John.

Irenaeus [Greek Name] does note that Papias had studied under the apostle John. There's a problem here of where the quotation from the elder ends and where the comment of Papias picks up, but my suggestion is it goes here, "not in order, the things either said or done by the LORD as much as he remembered..." and then we begin to get after that point not the Elder's statement which Papias remembered, but now Papias's explanation: "For he neither heard the LORD nor followed him, but afterwards, as I've said, heard and followed Peter..." etc. I think that's a good suggestion for the break because the next sentences he says are in the first person.

Mark is here called "the interpreter of Peter," and that might refer to a language that Peter did not know. Peter probably knew Greek as he wrote 1 and 2 Peter, but perhaps Mark translated it into Latin. However, Mark could be called an interpreter of Peter just because he wrote Peter's memoirs for him, so that could be straightforward. The phrase "accurately, but not in order..." is a little strange since many feel that the chronology, or order of events, in Mark is quite good. This might, however, refer to Mark's original note taking. That is Peter did not give the data in chronological order, but rather, as Papias himself said here, "fitted it to the need of his hearers..." as he gave the messages in various Christian churches. In this case Mark's compilation is in order, but the data given to him by Peter was not in order.

How about, "as much as he remembered...?" That probably also refers to Peter but not to Mark. "Accurate first occurrence..." is within the direct quote from The Elder; we suggest John. Probably Papias is following what we might think of as rabbinic usage here. The student memorizes exactly a teacher's statement, the Mishnah we might say, and then gives an explanation of that statement, the Gemara. So the quotation up [is] there before our asterisk, which would read this way: "Mark indeed, since he was the interpreter of Peter, wrote accurately, but not in order the things either said or done by the LORD, as much as

he remembered.” That would be the Elder’s statement, and then the remarks after that would be Papias’s explanation.

Well, that’s our first testimony regarding Mark. The second comes from a source that we didn’t mention in connection with Matthew, and that’s Justin Martyr. He is writing just ten or twenty years after Papias, 140 to 150 AD. We have two works preserved from him, his *Dialogue with Trypho*, which took place apparently shortly after the Bar Kokhba War, so perhaps to 140; and then his *First Apology*, which might be rather later than that. After speaking several times in the *Dialogue with Trypho* of the memoirs the Apostles called Gospels, and having just mentioned Peter, Justin said it is written in his memoirs that he changed Peter’s name as well as the sons of Zebedee, Boanerges. Well, if you look up Boanerges, you’ll realize it’s an allusion to Mark 3:16-17 and occurs nowhere else. So the natural reading of it is: it’s written in Peter’s memoirs that he, Christ, changed Peter’s name as well as the names of the son of Zebedee, Boanerges. The assumption that “his memoirs” refer to Peter as author and not to Christ is, I think, reasonable because Justin never refers to them as Christ’s memoirs, but always to the memoirs of the apostles.

A third testimony regarding Mark is Irenaeus writing now about a generation after Justin Martyr, 180 AD. We’ve already looked at the beginning of this statement, but I’ll pick that up again. “Matthew published while Peter and Paul were preaching a Gospel in Rome and founding the Church. After their Departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, also handed down to us in writing the things preached by Peter.” The ambiguous element in this particular quotation is the word “departure;” it’s “exodus,” okay? And “exodus” is used rather commonly in Greek for two different things, physical departure, and as a euphemism for departure from this life. So, is Irenaeus speaking of after the death of Peter and Paul, or after they left Rome? Both of those constructions are common. So you will not get the answer for that by just looking at a lexicon, if you like.

Fourth testimony is from Clement [of] Alexandria. We're looking at the same citation of Clement and outlines that we were looking at a little bit earlier where he said that the Gospels with the genealogies were written first. And then he goes on to say in that sentence, "The Gospel according to Mark had this occasion when Peter had preached the word publicly in Rome and had declared the Gospel by that Spirit. Those who were present—there were many—sought out Mark since he had followed him and remembered the things that had [been] spoken, to write out the things that had been said. When he had done this, he gave the Gospel to those who asked him. When Peter learned of it later, he neither obstructed nor commended it." Its outline is cited Eusebius' *Church History*, Book 6, Chapter 14, Section 5.

Note that in this citation by Clement, Peter is still alive when the Gospel is written because he reacts to it afterwards. Peter is not sure what to do with the writing; his puzzlement somewhat resembles what he experienced when the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles in Cornelius' house, not to mention the time Jesus was transfigured with Elijah and Moses, and he wasn't quite sure what to do, suggesting building tabernacles or something. Peter, as you recall, is one who is fast with the mouth, and not always fast with thinking it through. Outspoken, I think, we call that.

The fifth testimony is Tertullian. Tertullian is in the Latin part of [the] Roman Empire, North Africa, and he is writing around 200 AD. He says in his work *Against Marcion*, chapter 4, Book 2, Book 4, chapter 2, or chapter 4, section 2: "So then of Apostles, John and Mathew instill us with faith of Apostolic men. Luke and Mark renew it." This is Tertullian referring to the order of writing here.

Well, I doubt it; I suspect he only has in mind the strength of the witnesses regarding their proximity to Jesus. So Apostles are people who spend three years with Jesus, [like] John and Mathew. "Apostolic men" are people who spent years with Apostles, Luke and Mark; I think that's probably what he is saying there.

Origen is writing at about 255 AD. “We had already seen first the Gospel of Mathew was written, etc.” This continues in the same sentence. “Then, secondly, was written the Gospel according to Mark who made it as Peter instructed him, whom also he, [who is Peter] acknowledges his son in the Catholic Epistles in these words saying: ‘the church in Babylon elect together with you and Mark, my son, salute you’” (1 Peter 5:13). Well, “secondly Mark” would most naturally refer to chronological order, but perhaps in the context only the canonical order you remember there was a remark about recording the ecclesiastical canon back in the previous sentence.

Summary on authorship: First, that Mark wrote the Gospel ascribed to him is [the] unanimous opinion of tradition as is the belief that it gives us Peter’s preaching. Mark’s authorship is supported by extant manuscript titles. There is less argument over Mark’s authorship compared to Mathew or John. There is, however, considerably more resistance in liberal circles to the idea that he gives us Peter’s preaching.

Secondly, these traditions are consistent with the nature of the Gospel itself in a somewhat stronger more obvious way than was the case for Mathew. The linkage to Peter is not explicit to the manuscripts but is consistent with the tone of the Gospel as seen above under our internal evidence, and also the little vignette of Mark 14:51 and 52.

Thirdly, some see a contradiction in the tradition regarding the date of Mark and the time of writing relative to Luke. Irenaeus is interpreted as saying that Mark wrote after Peter’s death. Clement of Alexandria clearly implies that Mark wrote before Peter’s death. Contradiction, however, is not necessary here as Irenaeus may be referring to Peter and Paul leaving Rome alive, [a] literal “exodus,” rather than to their death, [a] figurative “exodus.” It appears that Paul at least did leave Rome after his first imprisonment according to Acts 28 and tradition.

Another alleged contraction relates to the order of Mark and Luke. Many traditions give the order Mathew, Mark, Luke, John, but Clement says that the Gospels with the genealogies, Mathew, Luke, were written first. So we would have something like Mathew, Luke, then Mark and John. We will need to come back and look at that when we look at the date of the Gospels.

That brings us to consider Luke's authorship, and again internal and external evidence. Well, internal evidence: except for its title, the Gospel text is anonymous. However, the prologue of Acts links Acts to Luke, and internal features in Acts suggest that the author of Acts was a companion of Paul, either Luke or Jesus Justice by trying to eliminate people who are or aren't around at the right times. The prologues of both Luke and Acts mentions Theophilus. Acts' prologue refers to a previous account, which is clearly the Gospel we call Luke. Also related to internal evidence: the vocabularies of Luke and Acts are similar and indicate a well-educated author with an unusual knowledge of medical terms. The classic work on this is William Clark Hobart, *The Medical Language of Saint Luke*, where this evidence is organized and presented for you. Well, that's the internal evidence on Luke's authorship.

External evidence: We have fewer early references to Luke than we do for Mathew and Mark. Perhaps no one saw fit to report Papias' comments on this Gospel if he made any; [but] since we don't have Papias in its entirety but only scattered quotations, we really don't know. The earliest source we have—actually, two of them about tied for the earliest—is what we call the Muratorian Canon written apparently late in the second century; so, say, 180 AD approximately, and written apparently in Italy. The Muratorian Canon is a list of books belonging to the New Testament, which is why it is called a canon; that was the term used for a list at that time, but named for its discoverer, Muritori, in 1740 rather than its author. They discovered pieces. It's a fragment with the end and the beginning missing In the manuscript we've got possible evidence that some of the middle was missing in one of its ancestors. We cannot tell that here. It survives in a single

8th century manuscript, which one scholar describes: “Written in barbarous Latin by a careless and ignorant scribe.” I am not qualified to respond to those sorts of things.

It’s clearly a translation of a Greek original, that it’s a Latin translation Greek, “Translation Latin” I guess we call that. From internal evidence it dates back to the late second century. It was written in or near Rome, which it calls “The City.” It refers to one of the early Popes as “in our own times,” so suggests that the author’s life overlaps with his; its Pious, the early second century Pope. It refers to Hermas, which is the brother of Pious, who is apparently Bishop of Rome in the author’s own lifetime. The canon starts out this way: “But he was present among them and so he put.”

The third book of the Gospel is “According to Luke.” “Luke is a physician after the ascension of Christ, when Paul had taken him with him as a companion of his traveling after he made his investigation wrote his own name. But neither did he see the Lord in the flesh and thus as he was able to investigate so he also begins to tell the story from the nativity of John.” As only Luke begins with the birth of John the Baptist, the correct Gospel is in view. No other known Gospel, including Apocrypha ones, begins with John’s nativity. Mark as a traveling companion fits with the testimony of Acts. So that’s the Muratorian Canon.

Second, Irenaeus from around the same time, (The Muratorian Canon we think from Italy somewhere), Irenaeus is writing from France, but grew up in Asia Minor. We’ll jump into his sentence again, which we already looked at. “Now Mathew published while Peter and Paul were preaching the gospel while in Rome and founding a church. After their departure Mark, the disciple and interpreter Peter, handed down the writings and things preached by Peter. Luke, also a follower of Paul, also put down a Gospel preached by that one, and then afterwards John.” So that’s what Irenaeus has to say there. Irenaeus seems to be giving the general chronological order of writing, but there is one little interesting quirk in it. He puts Luke third but he doesn’t quite say that Luke is written third.

After Peter and Paul's departure, Mark handed down to us right ... etc., and then Luke also put down in a book, then afterwards John." So Mark is clearly put after Mathew, and John is put after Luke; but Luke is just put "Luke also," so it might be intended to be chronological, which is certainly reasonable, but it doesn't quite say so explicitly.

Third testimony is Clement of Alexandria writing here about 208 from Egypt. And this is Eusebius again [quoting Clement]. Again in the same books Clement gives a tradition from the early presbyters concerning the order [of] the Gospels in the following manner. He said, "The Gospels which contained the genealogies were written first, but the Gospel according to Mark had this occasion." So notice: the chronological order of Clement seems different than Irenaeus in that Luke precedes Mark.

Two last testimonies regarding Luke: Tertullian writing about 215 from North Africa—that same quote that we had before. "So then of Apostles John and Matthew instill us in faith the apostolic men Luke and Mark renew it," for Luke's Gospel men are used to describe Paul.

And finally Origen, writing from about 225 in Egypt: "And thirdly, that According to Luke [is] the Gospel praised by Paul for whom they did for the Gentiles." The remark about "the Gospel praised by Paul" is probably referring to 2 Corinthians 8:18, but most commentators doubt that this is what Paul had in mind. Where it says, "According to my gospel," most writers today think he is referring to his message rather than a written work about Jesus.

Lastly, Eusebius writing about 330, in his *Church History*, Book 3, chapter 4, sections 6-7. "Luke in regard to race being of those of Antioch, but by profession a physician. Since he had been very much with Paul and had no mean association with the rest of the apostles, left us examples of the therapy of souls, which he acquired from them into inspired works. The Gospel which he testifies that he also wrote according to what those handed down to him who were eyewitnesses from the beginning and ministers of the word, all of whom he also

says he had followed even from the beginning. And the Acts of the Apostles, which he composed from what he had learned; not by hearing, but with his eyes. But men say that Paul was accustomed to refer to his Gospel whenever writing as if it were about some Gospel of his own.” Eusebius may be drawing inferences from New Testament passages as “my gospel” probably refers to both messages. Many of Paul's references to "my gospel" probably predate the writing of Luke.

That's our quick tour there. Summary and authorship here: that Luke was a follower of Paul and a physician, wrote the Gospel ascribed to him, though we have no remarks quite so early as from Papias from Matthew and Mark. By 200 AD we have information from all of the geographical areas of early Christianity agreeing that Luke is the author. This implies that the titles were at work for a long time, or that early Christians had access to common knowledge. That the author was a physician and that he traveled with Paul is consistent with the internal vocabulary of the third Gospel and with its linkage to Acts. Thus, based on internal evidence, Luke is most likely to be the author. The Gospel is frequently mentioned third, perhaps preserving a tradition regarding the order of authorship. Alternatively, this could be an early binding, or canon, order. [In the] Muratorian Canon that Irenaeus and Origen all cite, Luke as third. If Luke is really written third and after Paul's death, then Clement is in error, and some internal problems developed regarding the date of Acts.

### **Date of the Gospels**

So we turn to consider the date of these Gospels. So we've looked at the authorship, and it's interesting, I think in retrospect, to point out that we have no titles on any of the surviving manuscripts given to other authors. So ask yourself: Would these be the authors that people would actually have gravitated to? I think the answer would be well, John maybe; but Mark and Luke, not; and Matthew, not a major character among the Apostles, [yet] this is really the major thing he's noted for. So my suggestion is this really does go back to real knowledge. It is

seen in the lack of disagreement on these things.

### **Date of Matthew**

Let's look at the date of the Synoptic Gospels: the date of Matthew's Gospel, the date of Mark's Gospel and the date of Luke's Gospel. And we're going to look at internal evidence and external evidence. So date of Matthew's Gospel: internal evidence is of very little help here. Two remarks suggest that the Gospel was not written immediately after the Resurrection like in the 30s, and that is Matthew 28:8: "The place is called the field of blood to this day." This suggests there is some space between the event in which Judas hung himself and the event of writing the Gospel. Then Matthew 28:15 regarding the claim of the soldiers that the body was stolen: "This is widely spread among the Jews to this day." So, both imply [a] significant time interval between the event and the writing, but they don't say how much.

Liberals tend to date Matthew after 70 AD, partly to place it after Mark, which they date just before 70, and partly to postdate Jesus' predictions. We have in Matthew 21:41 the parable of the tenant farmers who kill the son, which implies the destruction of the nation Israel for killing Jesus. So they allege that after 70 AD the story was made up to fit what happened. But, of course, if Jesus knows the future, that's not really a strong argument.

And then Matthew 22:7, in the wedding banquet, the Jews refused to come and beat on his servants, so the king destroyed the murderers and set their city on fire. If it's Jerusalem, then it is written after 70 AD is the argument.

And then Matthew 23:38, "Your house is being left you desolate," either Jerusalem their house or the temple their house [is] destroyed, so after 70 AD.

Then Matthew 24: The Olivet Discourse describes the fall of Jerusalem. So it also must be written afterwards. Liberals say Mark could be written just before the fall of Jerusalem since that Gospel does not include these details as clearly.

Obviously, this is not a problem for believers, since all of these are in predictive contexts and Jesus can predict the future.

External evidence on the date of Matthew: Matthew was obviously written before the earliest surviving manuscripts. The papyri P64 and P67—which were actually the same papyrus, got numbered differently before it was realized by looking at the manuscripts that they were the same—and P77 represent two manuscripts from about 200 AD. So the Gospel had to be written before the year 200 AD. Well, probably nobody has denied that except for a few early atheists who felt that it was all written by monks in the Middle Ages.

The Epistle of Barnabas, probably written around 132 AD, cites Matthew 22:14: “Many are called but few are chosen,” by saying “As the scripture says,” but doesn’t say Matthew. People say Matthew was written by then pseudo-Barnabas who misremembered the quote as an Old Testament Scripture.; that Barnabas, like Christians at the time, viewed Matthew as Scripture. Traditionally, authorship would require that it be written within Matthew’s lifetime, but we don’t know how long he lived—probably no later than 100 AD. The information that we do have from tradition is that John outlived everybody else, and that he lived just into the time of Trajan. So generally it is given at around 100 AD. So Matthew probably died no later than 100 AD, and probably much earlier. This is obviously limited by Matthew’s age. Since Matthew was an adult with some authority, he was a tax collector by about 30 AD, it is presumed that he was probably at least 30 and maybe older than that by 30 AD. So it is doubtful he was living after 100 AD.

Thus the traditions imply that Matthew was written in the first century. Allusions in the Apostolic Fathers like Clement, about 95 AD, agree with this. Irenaeus’ tradition is dated 61 or 68 AD, “While Peter and Paul were in Rome preaching the gospel.” Several other traditions make Matthew’s Gospel the first one written, so it might conceivably be even earlier. Luke, as we’ll suggest below, was probably written in the late 50s, so Matthew’s date would thus be somewhat earlier than that.

Some various proposals for Matthew's date: these range from AD 37—and whoever made the note in the old Scofield Reference Bible—and 125 AD is the latest I've run into by my teacher Robert Kraft, a liberal at the University of Pennsylvania. 37 is probably too early for the "to this day" references; 125 AD seems to be far too skeptical of historical sources. It doesn't explain why Christians and even heretics accepted it and even used only the four Gospels.

My suggestion for the date looks like this – it's got some speculation to it—and that is that Irenaeus is slightly mistaken on the Peter and Paul thing, and suggests that Matthew wrote a Hebrew gospel in the 40s or perhaps the early 50s before he left Jerusalem. Now when Paul visits Jerusalem, he found Peter and John there. Matthew later made a Greek addition in the 60s for wider use, thus Irenaeus ... the language, but mistakes his publication in Greek for its original Hebrew composition. There is no way to prove that; it's just proposed.

Papias' statement implies that for some time Matthew was the only written gospel available, and it was in demand even in its Hebrew form as apparently no Greek translations had been made yet; and that seems to fit that. This model is proposed to fit the tradition of Matthew being the first Gospel written with the evidence of the pre-60 date of Luke. We will come back to that when we get to the date of Luke.

### **Date of Mark**

Mark's Gospel, internal evidence: nothing direct, liberals like to date by post-dating predictions so they tend to put it late. A solution that synoptic problem will have a varying year depending on whether we see Mark written before or after Matthew and Luke. External evidence, see the various fathers we sight from above, based on the account of surviving manuscripts and citations by the church fathers, Mark was considerably less popular than Matthew in the early church. That is of some interest particularly because it's got the tradition that Peter

is the source behind it and would probably make best sense if Matthew had already been circulating for a while.

There are several dating schemes for Mark. First what we might call the concordant dating scheme, that is a conflict minimizing scheme, and that interprets the testimony of the church fathers in such a way as to put the date of Mark in the 60s before the death of Peter. You remember Clement dates the gospel during Peter's life time. Irenaeus is referring to Peter leaving Rome and not to his death is his type of interpretation. So Peter is in Rome but leaves Rome for some reason. In that sense then we can date Mark between Paul's arrival in Rome, narrated in Acts and looks like about 61 to 63 AD and 68 AD when the persecution ended with Nero's death. Some scholars on the other hand, reject Clement of Alexandria's testimony and interpret Irenaeus remark so as to date Gospel after death of Peter. This a common liberal view with Mark dead after 68 perhaps with Mark dated after 68, in the early 70s. Some extreme liberals date Mark as late as 115 AD. Thirdly, many conservative reject all tradition and put Mark back in the 50s so that mark can predate Mathew and Luke. This view throws out a lot of data and you have work to maintain a conservative version of the Two Document Theory. This will be discussed under our topic the synoptic problem. Clearly, people are willing to ignore data so their view of the Synoptic Problem can be discussed as plausible, the concordant view seems to fit the data best and is favored by me. However, it must reject the Two Document Theory which puts Mark before Matthew.

### **Date of Luke**

That brings us to the date of Luke's gospel. Internal evidence: you can argue with this internal evidence or not, but clearly Acts 1:1 presupposes Luke. So the Gospel must be written before Acts. The prologues are connected since Acts refers to the previous account. Luke ends with the ascension and Acts picks up from there and continues. Both are addressed to the same person Theophilus. Liberals feel like Luke 21:20 refers to the Jewish war, so they date Luke after AD

70 as predicted in Luke 21:20. In 66 AD, the city was surrounded by armies but the Roman general got scared and retreated. This allowed people to flee the city as Jesus had warned them to do. Lots of Christians did, before the Romans came back again the second time in 68 AD and leveled Jerusalem as in verse 24. Only non-believer's feel the need to post-date prophecies. No such approach is noted for believers. Of course, Luke could have been written after AD 70 if other evidence indicates. Luke would write before the prophecy was fulfilled and that as the internal evidence.

External evidence: Acts as we discussed in our course. Acts seems to date from end Paul's first Roman imprisonment 63 to 64 AD and that's because the date of Acts seems to proceed the Roman fire of 64 AD. It lacks an antagonism between Christianity and Roman government. Once Nero put the blame for the fire on Christians, Christianity became an illegal cult until after 300 AD. Acts gives us no hint that Christianity is illegal. Acts also gives us no hint of the death of Paul, that also is a tradition, and Nero is still alive so that is no later than 68 AD. Paul has been in Rome for two years under house arrest when the book of Acts ends. Liberals try to explain this by saying everyone knows what happened to Paul so there is no need to include his death, but house arrest is a strange way to end a book if he's dead. Some, including some conservatives, think Luke planned on writing a third book as a sequel to Acts but for some reason wasn't able to do so. This argument is based on taking Acts 1:1 "the first account, I wrote" etc., the word is *proton* for "first" meaning the first of several, assuming Luke would have used *protaron* if he meant the first of two. Well, the word used in Acts 1:1 can mean "first of two" in Hellenistic Greek even though this is not in classic Greek. We have no particular reason to believe that Luke is writing in classical Greek, even though his Greek is better than some other Greek writers in the period. If our suggestion is right, Luke brings the reader up to date at the end of Acts. He is written just two years after Paul arrives in Rome.

Secondly, that Luke would be dated slightly earlier than Acts is seen from internal evidence above especially if Paul's two year imprisonment in Caesarea that is before his trip and ship wreck heading for Rome. Especially if Paul's two year imprisonment in Caesarea gave Luke the opportunity for researching and writing the Gospel. Now if Luke wrote the Gospel before the voyage to Rome, that would avoid the problem of Luke losing his notes in the shipwreck, though he might have saved them even so. In that case Luke might have started to circulate in the east about the time of Paul's voyage and not begin to circulate in the west till much later. A date of about 60 AD seems to buck the tradition that puts Mark in the 60s but earlier than Luke. I suggest that tradition is partly mistaken or that Mark and Luke are just simultaneous and reach different parts of the empire at different times. That Mark arrived first in some places, say the west, and Luke first in some places, say the east. Mark is traditionally written in Rome, the west. Clement in Egypt, the east, puts Luke ahead of Mark chronically. Irenaeus' testimony looks chronological, but note he is the one that says "Luke also" and puts it after Mark and before John. Note that he does not give a specific time of sequence for Luke, he doesn't say afterword. He may not seem to be chronological here or he may be mistaken because the sources got the two gospels at a different order than Egypt did. Then we date Luke 58 to 60 AD before Acts at 63 to 64 AD.

So a summary of the dates of the synoptic gospels: My notes here have a little chart, but I give a big broad span for Matthew from early as early 40s to something like the mid-50s. Luke the late 50s, and Mark the early to middle 60s. So I think that is probably a good place to stop.

Transcribed by Lydia Good, Monica DeMello, Aysha DeSilva, Jonmichael Tarleton,  
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 this Spring, 2013 after impacting all of us.  
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## **Dr. Robert C. Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Lecture 5**

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### **Characteristics of the Synoptic Gospels**

#### **Review and Preview**

We are continuing our Synoptic Gospels course here. So far we have looked at unit one, the historical Jesus; unit two, the Jewish background to the New Testament; unit three, the introduction to Jesus and the narrative genre; and then a look at Matthew 2, the visit with the Wise Men. Then last time we got started on unit four, authorship and date of the Synoptics and, in fact, we covered authorship and date of the Synoptics, but I also have a pretty long section in that [lesson] on characteristics of the Synoptic Gospels, so that is where we want to pick up right now—on characteristics of the Synoptic Gospels. We will do them as we did before: characteristics of Matthew, characteristics of Mark, and characteristics of Luke.

#### **Characteristics of Matthew**

So characteristics of Matthew: let's think a little bit about Matthew, the author, and the answer is that we don't know much about him. He is mentioned by name seven times in four different books in the New Testament. But these really only involve two occasions: one is his conversion and two is the apostle lists, as he is called in the apostles lists "Levi of Alphaeus" in Mark 2:14 So he may have been the son of Alphaeus and the brother of James the little. James is listed as the son of Alphaeus in Matthew 10:3 and Mark 3:18 Luke 6:15, and Acts 1:13.

Of his conversion we have a narrative in Matthew 9:9, Mark 2:14, Luke 5, 27, and 29. Mathew was a tax collector, and after his conversion he held a dinner for his old friends in order that they could meet Jesus. An interesting picture then of what I think believers should do in some sense when they come to Christ, and that is significant there. The apostle list in Mathew 10:3 is the only one using the

term publican/tax collector, and the other three lists—Mark 3:18, Luke 6:15, and Acts 1:13—just list him by name. In these four lists the apostles are sometimes in slightly different orders, but they're always grouped in three groups of four and are never mixed between groups. We don't know the significance of that, but that's how it looks anyway. Matthew is always in the second group as either disciple number seven or disciple number eight, and that is as the last or next to last in the second group. That's basically what we know about Matthew; there are obviously some traditions and such, but we'll let those ride.

### **Matthew's Audience**

Matthew's original audience: the Messianic emphasis in Matthew is certainly more appropriate for Jews, and you find rather quickly in the Gentile church "Christ" almost becoming kind of Jesus' surname of "Jesus Christ" rather than his title, which any of the Jews would have recognized, which [the title] was the Greek translation of "Messiah," "anointed one," if you would like. Matthew's Gospel tends to assume knowledge of Jewish practices rather than explain them. Mark tends to explain them, for instance, and that again then suggests principles and readers in view are Jews and Jewish Christians. So in Mathew 15:2 we have the tradition of the elders about washing their hands, and Mark gives three or four verses of explanation and Mathew doesn't. Then in Mathew 23:5 the Gospel writer says, "They broaden their phylactery and lengthen the tassels," and even the EDSB finds it necessary to expand that so that Gentile readers of the 20th and 21st century can understand it; so they add to "lengthen the tassels" parenthesis "of their garments" un-parenthesis.

To show their piety, some Pharisees wore bigger phylacteries and longer tassels than the average person. I remember meeting an Orthodox Jew over in Jerusalem, and the person had these tassels hanging out over his belt extra, so that still goes on today in some Orthodox Jewish circles.

In Mathew 23:27 the scribes and the Pharisees are described as white-

washed tombs. The Jews would, of course, recognize that allusion because they would white-wash tombs to prevent people from accidentally touching them and then becoming unclean, especially right before a festival. It wouldn't matter so much if they did that sometime during the year. So there were tendencies to white-wash the tombs right before the festivals. So it seems as if Matthew is writing to Jews and Jewish Christians. Well, Matthew gives no direct statement in his Gospel of his aim, so we can try and infer the aim by looking in the context of the Gospel.

The context suggests that Matthew's purpose is to show Jesus as the Messiah who fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies. Matthew often cites more prophecies and a wider variety of them more than any other Gospel writers. Matthew appears also, I think I mentioned this earlier, to draw a subtle parallel between the ministry of Jesus and the history of Israel. The Hosea 11:1 prophecy, "out of Egypt I have called my son," in Hosea is applied to Israel, but Matthew says it was a parallel there with Jesus as well and Jesus' use of Scripture at the temptation. Here he is out in the wilderness fasting, and his responses to Satan are all drawn from Israel and the wilderness passages.

Another way to try and figure out something as to what Matthew is doing is to look for internal evidence of structure. In general, when we are working with biblical writers and, for that matter, with other writers as well, we should try to find out how that writer outlined his material had he provided us with an outline. So how do we go about that rather than making arbitrary guesses of some sort? This will give us more of an accurate view of the book's structure.

Well, there are two possible passages that look like transition passages in Matthew that both begin with a phrase, "After that Jesus began" something or other. One's in Matthew 4:17; after that Jesus began to preach. If you look at the contents of the Gospel that begins Jesus' ministry to the multitudes—before that we had been looking at the genealogy, the birth narratives and Jesus' temptations in the wilderness—now this begins the ministry to the multitudes. So the transition

is to the preparatory narratives to Jesus' proclamation to the Gospel.

Then further on in Matthew 16:21: "After this Jesus again" then began to show his disciples. This begins what is generally called Jesus' private ministry to the disciples, and in a sense it outlines the rest of the book: that he is going to show his disciples that he needs to suffer, be killed, and rise again. So with these two transition passages we divide this Gospel into three pieces: the preparatory material, Jesus' public proclamation of the Gospel, and then at the other end—or the back end if you like—Jesus' private ministry to his disciples, his suffering, death, and resurrection.

There are a number of discourses in the Gospel of Matthew; more than and longer than in Luke and Mark. Mark, except for the Olivet discourse, has only very short materials. Usually there are only 5 discourses seen in the Gospel of Matthew; this goes back, I don't know how far, but back to Godet's, *Introduction to New Testament*, anyway. Then all end with a similar formula: "And it came to pass when Jesus had finished," or something, and then it goes back into the narrative at that point. So, "The Sermon on the Mount" takes up Matthew 5-7, and at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, we have this formula: "And it came to pass when Jesus had finished," and then it goes on with the following narrative. Then, in chapter 10 of Matthew, we have the instructions to the twelve, and 11:1 forms a transition passage. In chapter 13, we have the "Kingdom Parables," and 13:53 forms such a transition passage. Then in chapter 18, we have the "church discipline" material and a discourse to his disciples. Then in 19:1, we have a transition passage. And then in chapters 24 and 25 we have the Olivet Discourse, and chapter 26:1 is the closing formula on that.

There are a number of interpreters that have suggested that Matthew models his Gospel around the Pentateuch, so we have five discourses equivalent to the five books of the Pentateuch. Well, the Sermon on the Mount, perhaps, would fit Exodus fairly well, but then the question is: "What do you do with Genesis? The others don't seem to me to be particularly impressive in that direction. So, there

are five discourses, but it's not immediately obvious that that's what they're doing.

Some see some further parallels as well; the genealogy in Matthew corresponds to the "Book of the Generations," so if you drop the discourse idea you could perhaps suggest that the Gospel of Matthew starts out with kind of a Genesis section, which would be preparation. The Sermon on the Mount might work as Exodus, or something. But I'm not sure you could carry that too well.

The "wilderness temptations" even could be seen as "the wanderings," perhaps; though that would bring that after, that's on the wrong side of "the giving of the law, at Sinai," if you like, which is before "the wanderings," and such. Well, we'll not wander off there.

There are two other discourses in Matthew, however, not just five; so that throws things for a little bit of a loop. There's Matthew 23, "Woe to the Pharisees," or "Woes to the Pharisees," and admittedly, you could say 23, 24, and 25, but it looks like there's a big shift when you go into 25: you just get logical material going on there. Then also there's a discourse in Matthew 3, but that's John the Baptist's discourse. So again you could make some remarks about what that is. It does appear that Matthew's technique, if you like, is to give topical samples of Jesus preaching relevant to "Jesus is." To attempt to get these samples to fit the "Pentateuch" seems to me to be rather stretched. But Matthew uses fairly big chunks, whereas Mark uses very short pieces, and Luke uses different kinds of pieces, if you like; I think that's fairly clear.

Some have suggested that Matthew is involved with shifting his materials chronologically and gathering them by theme rather than chronologically. His discourses are, as we've said, admittedly by topic, and his miracles are mainly concentrated in chapters 8 and 9. On top of that, we can say that Matthew's order of events is different from that of Mark and Luke in a few places. Certainly all the Gospels have the same order of events in the sense of public ministry and then private ministry, and then the triumphal entry, and death, resurrection, and such. But we find no solid evidence of chronological liberty between the Gospels; that

is, the same events are explicitly said to have happened in different order. There are complications, and the question is in looking through the Gospels of whether two events seen in two different Gospels are the same even event or whether they are different events. Liberals have often claimed that there was really only one “cleansing of the temple,” but John for some reason, or the Synoptics for some reason, put it at different ends of Jesus’ ministry. Of course, you’ve also got the miraculous catch of fish in John, which is at the end of Jesus’ ministry, and in the Synoptics it is at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. My read on those is that some of those are things [that] are done over again.

Some others that we’re not so sure about: there’s a very strong resemblance between the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew and what is often called “The Sermon on the Plain” in Luke. My own inclination is that those are probably two different ways of condensing the same sermon. But I might be wrong because Jesus is an itinerate preacher, if you like; not quite in the same form of visiting different churches like our itinerate preachers do, but more like Wesley or somebody who speaks in the open at different places. So he may well have used similar material at different places; that would not be at all that surprising, in that case.

Well, different cultures have different literary procedures. Quotations have to follow a specific accuracy and style for an academic thesis in the West; but the requirements for a newspaper article are nowhere near as formal. So we should not be surprised that sometimes Jesus’ words sound somewhat different in one Gospel record than another. Of course, to invent dialogue which never occurred should be viewed as bad in any culture, and I think that that’s correct. When you’re condensing a long speech or a long narrative, a writer might use key sentences from a discourse, or he might simplify the action, or summarize it in his own words. Those kinds of approaches would certainly be acceptable as long as he tells us what actually took place. He may not, however, actually tell us what he’s

doing; that just makes the narrative longer and complicates things in one way or another. So my read on this is that the Gospels are thoroughly reliable and tell us what happened, et cetera; but without a time machine, we may not be able to figure out exactly how to harmonize all the particular incidents nor tell for sure whether these two “healings of a leper” are actually the same event or two different occasions of that.

Moving on, we’re still describing the characteristics of Matthew: characteristic phrases in Matthew. There are two phrases that are rather common in Matthew; one of them, of course, is: “That it might be fulfilled.” Some of these “fulfillments” are also noted in other Gospels, but not so many as in Matthew. Some liberals have suggested that a “Book of Testimonies” [existed]; that is, a compilation of Old Testament proof-texts about the Messiah used in the early Church. Well, this might be so, but it’s more likely that these go back to Jesus’ own explanation. If you remember that on the “road to Emmaus” he explained Old Testament passages to the two there, and then in the upper room a few hours later he explained them to a larger group of disciples. My suggestion is that the fulfillment remarks, such as Matthew’s, and the citation of various Old Testament passages in Paul and Peter and such are, in fact, a reflection of what Jesus told them at that time. He, of course, of all people would know what Old Testament prophecies were designed to point to the Messiah.

The other characteristic phrase in Matthew is “Kingdom of Heaven.” This phrase occurs over 30 times. Although there are some who would disagree, I think this phrase is synonymous with “Kingdom of God.” What we find is that Mark and Luke never have “Kingdom of Heaven”, and Matthew almost always has “Kingdom of Heaven,” but occasionally will have “Kingdom of God”, et cetera. That Matthew’s “Kingdom of Heaven” is used in a lot of the same contexts that Mark and Luke’s “Kingdom of God” is and Matthew also has one passage where he uses both terms in parallel; that’s in Matthew 19, verses 23 and 24. Some light can be shed on this, by knowing some of the Rabbinic literature. In Rabbinic

sources we find that the Rabbis were reluctant to use the term “God,” and so they would use replacements for that. One of those replacements was “heaven,” one of those was “glory,” and one of those was “the place,” and various other things of this sort. So it appears then that Matthew, as a pious Jew, is using “Kingdom of Heaven,” rather than “Kingdom of God” most of the time.

Some other materials that are in Matthew are unique to Matthew and, therefore, are characteristic in that sense. We already mentioned that Matthew refers to various Jewish customs and usages that, perhaps, would not be especially interesting to Gentiles. Matthew and Luke both have birth material, but some of it is distinct to Matthew, [and] some of it is distinctive to Luke. Both are clear on the Virgin Birth, but otherwise they don’t overlap a whole lot. Matthew notes the Wise Men coming, Herod’s attempt to kill Jesus, and the flight to Egypt, etc. Luke doesn’t mention those at all. It appears to me that Matthew gives Joseph’s perspective, and Luke gives us Mary’s perspective. In Matthew we see Joseph wondering, Joseph worrying, Joseph acting, while Luke says, “Mary pondered these things in her heart,” etc. It’s Mary who goes to visit her cousin Elizabeth, and such. So that is my take on the difference between the two birth narratives.

Interestingly, for the most Jewish of the Gospels, if you like, there is some interesting material on the church in Matthew, and really nothing comparable to that in Luke or Mark or John. We have Peter and the church in Matthew 16. Church discipline is in Matthew 18. I would suggest this raises some sort of problem for the variety of Dispensationalism, which makes such an absolute distinction between the church and Israel, and which sees Matthew as the Jewish Gospel in the sense that it’s not for this dispensation, which is sort of characteristic of old, or classic, Dispensationalism rather than what we call “Progressive Dispensationalism” today. “Upon this rock I will build my church [*ecclesia*]” in Matthew 16. *Ecclesia* is a Septuagint term. It’s the term that is used for “congregation,” and is so often the translation of *qahal* from the Hebrew [for] “congregation.” But, of course, Jesus does speak of “my *ecclesia*” [church], so

that's to be distinguished from the Old Testament *ecclesia*.

Then there's the Great Commission in Matthew 28. A commission also appears in Mark that is in a somewhat questionable text. Luke, Acts, and John each have something of the sort as well in a different context one from the other. Jesus saw the spread of the Gospel as sufficiently important to repeat the instructions on several occasions. Liberals don't tend to like the implications of "go to all the nations" and such, and that Jesus will be with the disciples through the ages—and the Trinitarian formula, for that matter. So they tend to deny that this goes back to Jesus.

It's rather interesting, though, that the Gospel of Matthew, as well as a number of other places in the Scripture, predicts the worldwide spread of the Gospel, but all of the Bible was written long before there was any worldwide spread of the Gospel. So you've got some kind of fulfillment going on there anyway. They [liberals] tend to question Matthew's authenticity and date because [of] the perceived conflicts with Acts: the Matthew account command to go versus the early reluctance in Acts of the Apostles to go; and the Trinity baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit versus the early baptism in the name of Christ [only], etc. And perhaps both of those are over-reading the passages to suggest you're getting an exact formula or something that's used in baptismal ceremonies. None of these sorts of things are serious if Christianity is true.

If Jesus is who the Bible claims he is, then his coming resurrection is certainly news of earthshaking importance. Psalm 22 says this much, and it was certainly written before the rise of Christianity. If Jesus is God,, and there's only one God then he's present everywhere and shares his name with the Father. The Acts problems relate largely to emphasis: The early disciples were apparently willing, or apparently waiting, for further instructions on how to go about this and did not at first realize the Gentiles would become Christian's as Gentiles without [first] converting to Judaism. We probably misread Matthew and Acts in taking

the phrases “in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit” and “in the name of Jesus Christ” as instructions on the exact wording to be used in the ceremony.

I’ll give a sketch outline here on Matthew, but I’m not sure that comes across terribly well in reading. Let me just give you a quick tour of it without all the numbers. Matthew starts out with the genealogy [that] runs for most of chapter one; then the birth and infancy that brings us to the end of chapter 2; and then preparation for ministry, which takes us through all of three and part of four. Then the Galilean ministry runs from middle of chapter four to the end of chapter 18 and can be divided up into public ministry—middle of four to beginning of 13—and limited ministry for about three chapters; and then a private ministry for about three chapters. This is followed then by the journey to Jerusalem, which takes up about two chapters, 19:1 to 21:1. Then the last week, and that’s about five chapters; and then the betrayal, trial, and crucifixion takes up two chapters. Finally, the post-resurrection appearance takes up one chapter. So basically Matthew has just the Galilean ministry. We’ll see something similar with Mark, whereas Luke has [the] Perean ministry, and John has a good deal on the Judean ministry as well. Here already the last week through the resurrection takes up eight chapters of the 28-chapter book. So there is a big, big section on the end of Jesus’ earthly ministry, if you like.

## **Characteristics of Mark**

### **John Mark the Person**

We’re going to move on to characteristics of Mark, and as we did with Matthew, we’ll start with the man John Mark. Mark is actually mentioned in the New Testament 10 or 11 times, so actually more than Matthew, even though Matthew is an apostle and Mark is not. Mark is mentioned, however, six times in Acts, so that’s where we get most of his material from; and then three times in the Pauline Epistle’s: once each in Colossians, Philemon, and 2 Timothy; once in 1

Peter—“Mark my son,” etc., says Peter—and then perhaps in Mark 14:51, 52: the losing sheet at the arrest incident. So he is mentioned ten or eleven times; that’s enough material to allow us to do a little something of tracing his life.

Colossians 4:10 tells us that Mark was a cousin of Barnabus. I think the KJV has “nephew.” The word is actually cognate to “nephew,” *anepsios*, but is generally understood now to be a little more generic word, so “cousin,” which doesn’t tell you a great deal since there are first and second and third cousins, and removes, and all of that sort of thing, at least [in] English genealogical terminology.

Mark’s mother was Mary, and we’re told in Acts 12:12 that she owned a house in Jerusalem. His father is not mentioned; maybe he was already dead, or maybe he was not a believer; we don’t know there. Mark might have been present at Jesus’ arrest—that’s Mark 14:51, 52; this is speculation. A possible story [that] suggests how that would work is the Last Supper [where it] is suggested to be held at Mary’s house. We don’t know that, but we do know that Mary owned a house and that it was used by the believers later on anyway. If the Last Supper was held at Mary’s house, the mob comes to the house to arrest Jesus; after all, Judas can’t be expected to know exactly where Jesus was going after that point, but he’ll try out various locations perhaps. Mark awakens from a mob arriving at the house; likely he follows the mob at a distance wrapped in his bed sheet all the way to Gethsemane, watches the arrest from the bushes, and almost gets caught himself. This is speculation, but a little picture nevertheless.

Mark was living in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12) with his mother during the persecution in which James the son of Zebedee was killed and Peter was imprisoned. That takes place, we think, around 44 AD, or shortly before, based on information we have in Josephus about the time and the death of Herod Agrippa I who was the guy that was involved there.

Then Barnabas and Paul take Mark with them to Antioch, Acts 12:25. Mark then goes along with Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey, Acts 13:5,

as their assistant. A *upēretēs* originally meant an “under rower” and a trireme or something of that sort, but has become a generic term for “assistant” by this point. As Mark probably had little training in the Word, certainly compared with Paul and Barnabas, he probably did things like looking after housing and food and that sort of thing.

Mark, however, abandons them when they go into Asia Minor from Cyprus. Perhaps Mark had been to Cyprus before since Barnabas was a cousin and didn’t want to go into the new territory or something. We see that in Acts 13:13. The estimated date for that trip is 47-48 AD. Whatever the reason was, Paul didn’t think it was a good reason, and some possibilities have been suggested on why Mark might have abandoned them. One might be, it looks like there might be a switch in leadership from Barnabas to Paul in the early part of this first missionary journey narrative. Barnabas is listed ahead of Paul, but then after the incident on Cyprus, where Sergius Paulus is converted and Elymus the sorcerer is blinded by Paul, or by God, obviously, thereafter Paul is mentioned first, and it’s possible that Mark was irritated by this (we don’t know, we’re guessing here: reconstructions if you like).

Secondly, there is a possibility that going into Asia Minor was a change of plan, and Mark did not want to be gone that long. Or thirdly, Mark opposed the aggressive evangelization of the Gentiles which is then going to begin to take place. Or he became fearful as it was dangerous, or disillusioned, or homesick; all of those are possibilities, and again we’re speculating as we have no time machines.

After the Jerusalem council, Paul and Barnabas planned a second missionary journey to visit the churches they had established; this is narrated for us in the latter part of Acts 15. Barnabas wants to give Mark a second chance, but Paul does not. So they split up, and Mark and Barnabas go to Cyprus, and Paul and Silas—a mature Christian—head for Asia Minor; and this is around 50 AD. Well, we hear nothing more of Mark until later in the epistles since Acts, as you

recall, mainly follows Paul.

About ten years later, something like 61-63 AD, Mark is back in the good graces of Paul. We see that in Colossians 4:10 and finally into [verse] 24. Mark is apparently being sent on a mission by Paul and is commended to the Colossian church. He is now a fellow worker with Paul. Still later, Mark is near Ephesus and is commended as being useful to Paul, 2 Timothy 4:11, somewhere in the 64-68 AD period. Timothy is to bring him along when he comes from Ephesus. In 1 Peter 5:13—so this is Peter, which might predate the 2 Timothy reference; we don't know—Peter is still alive, but the Roman persecution, I think, has apparently begun, so we suggest it's maybe 64 or later. It seems to me that Peter is warning the Asian churches about this persecution, perhaps even warning Paul's churches about this, which may suggest perhaps Paul is off in Spain or something of that sort. Mark is with Peter in Babylon, okay, and sends his greetings. Peter calls him “my son,” presumed in a spiritual sense. We have no indication that Peter is the father of Mark and Mary is Peter's wife, although I suppose one could construct something of that sort.

Where is Babylon? Where is this Babylon they're in? Well, it is [a] literal possibility as the area of Mesopotamia around where the city of Babylon had been. There was still a large Jewish community. So we have the Babylonian Talmud as the name of the Eastern Rabbinic collection of literature there.

[There is] this place in Egypt near modern Cairo that was called Babylon; I don't know the history of how it got that name. It also had a large Jewish community.

The third possibility is Rome. It's certainly called Babylon in Revelation. Well, maybe it's too strong to say certainly, but I think that's the general reading of the commentators. It may be that Peter is using a code to throw off the authorities in case the letter is intercepted. That sort of thing is not unheard of in the history of dealing with governments by groups that are being mistreated by them for one reason or another. Tradition says that Mark later went down to

Alexandria in Egypt and became a leader of the church there.

So that much then for Mark the man: we do know a lot more about him than we do about Matthew, at least from the scriptural material.

### **Mark's Audience**

What about Mark's audience? Pretty clearly his audience is Gentile and possibly Roman. The Aramaic phrases, of which there are many in Mark, are generally translated. Thus readers were not expected to know Aramaic. Jewish practices are explained. For instance the cleansing of the hands is explained. For any Jew something like that would be unnecessary. Thus, it appears that Mark is writing to a non-Jewish audience which is unfamiliar with the languages and culture of Palestine.

The people are clearly Gentiles from tradition and perhaps from the Latinisms; as we'll see some Latinisms here in a moment. We may also infer that these Gentiles were Romans; while the evidence is not that strong, it is certainly a possibility.

There are several Latinisms; that is, the use of Latin terms put in Greek alphabet, if you like, that occur in the Gospel of Mark. There's a *phragello* in Mark 15:15; it means "to whip" or such. "To flagellate" actually is the verb which has been imparted over to English from the Latin *flagello*. This term, however, also appears in two other Gospels: in John 2 and Matthew 11; so it may only show that since the Romans had been dominant in Israel since 63 BC that some of their terms had come over. You could certainly find that sort of thing happens with an occupying army for 50 or 100 years when a number of terms become common in the local language, if you like. One that is a little more distinctive is *kenturion*, which occurs three times in Mark 15, from the Latin *centurion*, and that doesn't seem surprising to us because we have imported it into English as well, but Matthew, Luke, and Acts use the Greek equivalent: *hector* in our case—leader or ruler over a hundred. So you might say that's the Greek term for that level of

officer in an army. Well, I doubt that we should put a lot of weight on just a few Latinisms like that when it comes to guessing the audience.

### **Purpose of Mark**

Aim of Mark: no direct statement is given in the Gospel. It's more difficult to infer an aim from Mark than from Matthew. The author does not say he's intending to preserve the traditions of Peter, for instance, or that he's intending to present the Gospel to Romans, or Gentiles for that matter. The opening line, of course, may very well state the aim. Mark 1:1: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." That, of course, is something shared by all four of the Gospels, so it wouldn't be what we call a distinctive aim; but clearly it's the aim of Mark in the sense that this is the good news about Jesus, who is the Messiah, and who is the Son of God.

Well, perhaps Mark—this has been suggested by some commentators—is aimed especially at Roman mentality as compared with the Greeks anyway. And, of course, you could compare them with the Hebrews, and the Assyrians, and the Egyptians and things [of] that sort. The Romans tended to be practical, action-oriented, organized, etc. And, of course, Peter himself had such a practical temperament, so he probably fit well with the Romans in this, and that's when we read the little thing out of Clement of Alexandria about Mark: that the people in Rome were excited hearing what Peter had to say and they wanted Mark to write it up. So that's perhaps what we've got here. Plus there may have been a demand for his material among the Romans, as our tradition from Clement says.

### **Characteristics of Mark**

Well, characteristics of Mark: we mentioned these briefly back earlier when we were discussing authorship and date. There's vividness in Mark. Mark is full of graphic and picturesque details, which are not required for the action, but add some color and depth to the narrative. "The five thousand reclined on the green

grass.” Well, that wouldn’t sound like anything in England, or the US, or the Eastern US, or something of that sort,; but the grass is only the green part of the years in that part of the world. So it’s really telling you something.

Mark notes Jesus’ emotion; he uses the historical present frequently to add life to the narrative. That’s at least been a common suggestion on what the historical present does in the Greek.

There is a lot of detail in Mark. Mark is shorter than Matthew or Luke or John, but he often reports incidents with more detail than do Matthew or Luke. He sometimes gets the names of the people involved, the time of day, the surrounding crowds are mentioned, and these things are frequently not found in the other Gospels. Yet, as I said, Mark is the shortest Gospel; the shortness is obtained by omitting long discourses and reporting fewer events.

Activity: another feature that is distinctive of Mark is the activity in the Gospel. The action in Jesus’ ministry is emphasized. This Greek word, *euthus*, “immediately,” is often translated that way. It is used over forty times and tends to give Mark’s narrative sort of a rushed, breathless quality. Mark stresses Jesus’ actions more than Jesus’ words. Mark does not usually give long discourses of Jesus, as I’ve mentioned before. The Mark thirteen discourse is Jesus’s longest speech in Mark. Mark is packed with miracles. Eighteen are recorded, though only two are unique to Mark. So, that’s a characteristic of vividness, detail, and activity.

Aramaic: many Aramaic words are recorded and usually translated into Greek. Some of these Aramaic words are unique to Mark: *Boanerges* that Jesus gives to the two sons of Zebedee, meaning sons of thunder. *Talitha cum*, Mark 5:41; the command to Jairus’ daughter: “Little girl, arise.” *Ephphatha*, 7:34: the command to the deaf-mute, “Be opened.” Bartimaeus, [the] named blind man, just means “Son of Timaeus.” Mark even translates the Aramaic name Bartimaeus, [and] suggests that the audience had no feel for Aramiac whatsoever. There’s *abba*, 14:36: Jesus addressing God, meaning “Father” that is used elsewhere by Paul in Romans and Galatians, but not in the other Gospels.

There are also some Aramaic words in Mark that are also found in the other Gospels: *corban*, 7:11: “Gift of the temple,” which is explained in Mark but not translated in Matthew 27:6. *Golgotha*, 15:22, means “place of the skull.” Both Matthew and John use this, and all three translate it. *Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani*, 15:34: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me.” Matthew uses it and also translates it, as does Mark. *Rabb,i* or *Raboni*, is used a number of times: in Mark four times, in Matthew four times, in John nine times. But it is only translated once, and that is by John. Mark probably used the Aramaic for vividness, but it may again be, as the tradition suggests, Peter recalling the very words Jesus used, or something of that sort. These quotations do not tell us that Jesus only spoke Aramaic. His conversations with a Syro-Phoenician woman and with Pilate imply that he had knowledge of Greek.

Well, now I will give a sketch outline of Mark. Let me walk you through that one again. We’re looking at a considerably shorter gospel than Matthew by chapters; and Matthew’s got twenty-eight chapters and Mark only sixteen. Preparation for the ministry in Mark only takes part of chapter one, then the Galilean ministry picks up in the middle of chapter one and runs to the end of chapter nine. It is not clearly divided up into public, limited private, or something like that. Then you have the journey to Jerusalem which takes up a chapter, chapter ten. The last week takes up three and some, three chapters and about ten verses (11:1 to 14:10). Then you’ve got the betrayal, trial, and the crucifixion that takes up less than two chapters. The resurrection is one chapter. And, of course, with the question of the last twelve verses of Mark, eight verses for the post-resurrection materials. So that’s the gospel of Mark.

## **Characteristics of Luke**

### **Person of Luke**

We’re going to now do the same thing with Luke. Characteristics of Luke: Luke’s the physician. Luke is only mentioned by name three times in the New

Testament: Colossians 4:14, Philemon 24, and 2 Timothy 4:11; so of the three people (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), Luke is mentioned far fewer times by name. From these sparse references, however, we can infer that Luke was a physician, and that he was loved by Paul (Colossians 4:14). He was a faithful companion to Paul, even to the very end in Rome (2 Timothy 4:11). He is, apparently, Gentile rather than Jewish. We'll have some zealous people say that all the New Testament is composed by Jews, but the evidence is really quite strong that Luke is a Gentile.

What's that evidence? Well, it's indirect, but Colossians 4:10-14 is a series of greetings that Paul is sending from his friends from where he is to Colossi. Paul breaks those into two groups. He says in the middle of that, "These are all of those from the circumcision that were with me," and then he goes on through the latter group. It's clear that the people ahead of that are Jewish—at least a couple of them are clear. And he says that for the whole group. Luke is in the uncircumcised group.

But in addition to these just three references to Luke by name, we have what we call the "we" passages in Acts; that is, places where the writer of Acts indicates that he is present with the others in the narration at that particular point. The author in these cases writes in the first person plural, including himself in the action. There are three textually certain occurrences of this: Acts 16:10-17 (Paul's second missionary journey), after Paul receives a vision to go to Macedonia, "We perceived etc....us." It picks up there, and so on through that eight verse passage, the group there consisting of Paul, Silas, Timothy, and the author.

The use of "we" starts in verse 10, ends in verse 17, and that's geographically they are doing some traveling then. It would imply that the author would have joined the group at Troas and left them at Philippi. Then in Acts 20, verse 5, "we" passages pick up again, and they run on to 21:18, so over a chapter. This is on the third missionary journey. The usage is more spotty throughout this section, but note that the "we" begins in Philippi; so it ended a few years earlier in

Philipi and picks up again in Philippi.

Well, if you take the simplest hypothesis, which is not always correct, the suggestion would be that Paul dropped Luke off to help with the new church in Philippi, and that he was still there several years later when Paul come back through Philippi. It goes on from Philippi and ends in Jerusalem. Perhaps he offers to go as a delegate for the Philippian church in taking gift money to Jerusalem. He does not name himself, however, in the list of delegates, unless he's not Luke; but it looks like Luke's practice is not to name himself in the Book of Acts.

Well, we'll go on from there. The third "we" passage is in Acts 27:1-28:16, the voyage to Rome. This is now two more years later. "We" picks up in Caesarea, where Paul has been in prison now for nearly two years, and ends in Rome. This suggests that perhaps Luke remained in Palestine with Paul through Jerusalem, and then meets him two years later in Caesarea. For the two years between the third missionary journey and this fourth journey to Rome, my suggestion is that Luke perhaps used this time to research the Gospel materials that he writes up.

So when I was back there doing the dating of Luke, my suggestion was he researched the material for the Gospel of Luke, wrote it up, and had it ready before they left for Rome. It begins to circulate in the East. He may have lost his copy in the shipwreck, we don't know that, so that might explain why the Gospel circulates later in the West than it does in the East, but that's all guessing.

We also have one "we" passage of uncertain text—that's in Acts 11:28, [and] occurs in what we call the Western text, and it's at Antioch before Paul's first missionary journey. The passage refers to Agabus, the prophet in Antioch, and here the "we" may reflect just an early tradition that Paul was originally from Antioch. Or, as someone suggested, that Codex Beza in the Western family manuscripts represents a slightly different edition of Acts, and then it may even be Luke's remark that he was present at Antioch when Agabus showed up there.

Liberals tend to discount the force of these "we" passages by saying that the author of Acts, who they think is not Luke, used a diary and extracted the "we"

passages as direct quotes. This is not the most natural interpretation of the phenomenon, but those things do happen.

Well, we move on, still talking about Luke the physician—Luke is a Greek physician. Given Luke’s use of medical terminology, Luke was probably trained in the Greek medical tradition. We know something about it. The two most famous Greek physicians of Antiquity belong to the so-called Hippocratic School. Most of us have perhaps heard of another Hippocratic Oath, the oath that physicians used to take. I’m not sure whether they still do so or not because one of them is to do no harm to the people while they’re trying to heal them. The two most famous physicians of the Hippocratic School are Hippocrates himself, fourth century BC, and Galen, second century AD, so after Luke’s time. Some of the writings of the Hippocratic School are available today. We don’t always know who wrote particular ones, and they give us their general procedures. These men and their associates were noted—that is, distinct from many of the other methods of doing medicine of Antiquity—were noted for diagnoses by observation and deduction.

A rather important, what you would say, medical movement in the Greco-Roman world was in the temples of the healing god Asclepius: Asclepius in Greek and Aesculapius, in Latin. Their method of diagnosis was by divination. But the Greek Hippocratic School diagnosed by observation and then making deductions from that by careful collection of case reports, so that a particular location or particular doctor would have lots of case reports written up, which you could check against then and see, “Well, the symptoms look like this...,” “What went on in that case?” and such. And as you get more and more of those, you begin to get some valuable information on how to treat various diseases. So case reports, symptoms, and treatments helped to build experience, or at least showed what not to do in various kinds of cases.

The Hippocratic Schools are also noted for simple treatments. They used some herbal drugs, they used diet, and they used rest. They tended to stay away

from exotic stuff like magic, putting dung on puncture wounds, or chicken teeth, or things of that sort. A nice discussion of these sorts of things occurs in the book by S. I. McMillen and his grandson David Stern, I believe. *None of These Diseases*, which gives a good discussion of the Bible contrasted with some of your more exotic, ancient medicine. The Hippocratic School's also noted for pretty high standards of hygiene.

Well, it looks like Luke probably had this background, and it seems that [when] he ended writing his Gospel and Acts, that he had interviewed people whom Jesus perhaps had healed, and did it in perhaps a case report style. So occasionally you get a number of medical terms that he gives in his healing miracles, if you like.

Okay some other suggestions about Luke—Luke's hometown: Both Eusebius and Jerome from antiquity say that Luke was a native of Syrian Antioch. There were a lot of Antiochs scattered through the world. The famous one was the one there in Syria, which fits that variant that shows up in the Western text of the New Testament. Well, Luke's use of the term "Hellenists" in Act 11:20 apparently refers to Pagans rather than Jews. It may be that Luke means by "Hellenist" someone who is not Greek racially, but who adopted Greek culture; and that would sit with lots of different towns, but would sit well with Antioch where he had lots of Syrians who had adopted Greek culture, and so they were Hellenists, but they weren't Hellenistic Jews. So you've got this problem whether to translate "Hellenists" or "Greeks" in that particular passage in Acts 11:20. And "Hellenist" is definitely [a] harder reading.

William Ramsey, who has done a lot of work on Paul, thought that Luke was from Philippi, as this is where Luke is left and where he's later picked up. Of course, that's possible, but there is no particular reason for that; Paul would obviously have used associates to help and work with the early churches and such. Ramsey also goes on, rather speculatively, to claim that Luke was the cause of Paul's Macedonian vision. We see a little bit of a rationalistic approach in

Ramsey, that Paul had met Luke, and so dreamed about him that night, and went over to Macedonia with him, et cetera. I would say this idea seems rather unlikely, although Luke does appear suddenly in the narrative at Troas.

If Luke is from Antioch, then apparently either he meets Paul accidentally in Troas, or he had been sent out by the Antioch church to try and find Paul and perhaps bring him money, or something of that sort, to help with his missionary trip.

Another suggestion about Luke is that Luke is the brother of Titus. Alexander Souter is the one who suggested this, and he bases it on 2 Corinthians 8:18, where the brother mentioned in that verse could be translated as “his brother.” Here’s what the passage looks like in NASB: “Paul says we have sent along with him,” and he’s been referring to Titus, just before, “We have sent along with him the brother, who’s name in the gospel has spread through all the churches.”

So Souter notes that Titus is a significant person in Paul’s epistles but strangely is never mentioned in Acts. He suggests this is similar to the phenomenon we see in the Gospel of John where the author never mentions himself or his brother James. Souter then suggests that Luke minimizes all references to himself and apparently felt that references to his brother would call attention to him as well. Well, once again, it’s pretty speculative since Paul does refer to other people as brothers and frequently uses the term spiritually.

### **Purpose of Luke**

Well, that brings us to that question of the aim and method of Luke. For aim, we get an explicit statement in Luke. It’s in the first four verses. The aim of Luke is to allow Theophilus, the person who is first addressed in the writing the Gospel Luke, to know the certainty, or reliability, of the things that he has been taught. So Theophilus, apparently, has been taught at least the basics of Christian faith. So Luke’s aim is given in [the] prologue at Luke 1:1-4, written in Greek of an even more classicized, careful Hellenistic style than his usual writing. [The]

prologue is compressed in comparison with that of other prologues in other histories of other times. But then again he is writing a one-volume history, and Josephus is writing a 7 volume, or 20 a volume history, or something of that sort. But the prologue gives the same information in such prologues and serves as the dedication in explaining how and why the work was undertaken.

Liberals are nervous about this term “reliable,” as it applies that someone tried to write as accurate history of Jesus as was possible in about AD 60. If Luke succeeded, then Liberal theology is down the drain.

The “most excellent” use of that title for Theophilus is a title given to government officials. Such usage is seen in the book of Acts [and] also seen in other Greek book dedications. For instance, the “Writings of Galen” and the “Early Christian Apostle to Dignitas,” they both had that kind of thing as well. Theophilus may or may not be a Christian. His name is what we call *theophoric*, or a god-bearing name. Theophilus, is “lover of God.” So some have said it’s just an allegorical name for sending this book out to all those people who love God. Possible. An allegory is certainly not unheard of in the Greco-Roman world. Yet, god-bearing names like his were common in Greek and Jewish cultures, so we can think of a huge number of theophoric names in the Hebrew Old Testament and Hebrew names of that sort in the New Testament as well. But we actually have a number of god-bearing names in the New Testament, as well that obviously are real names.

There are three of them in 1 John. Let’s see if I can remember their names: Gaius, which apparently connects with Gaia, the earth mother; and Diotrephes, “nourished by Zeus.” Diotrephes, and what’s the other—I’m not coming up with it off the top of my head; that’s why I’ve got notes here. I can’t remember these things. Well, anyways, that’s two of three of them there. So we can’t really very well argue that the person is imaginary merely based on the etymology of his name. Presumably, in any case, Luke had a wider circulation in mind for this Gospel; probably his intended wider audience is educated Gentiles, and so he

writes in a rather nice style—and it's written in Greek, of course.

Luke's prologue also tells us not only about his aim, but his method. We are told, first of all, that Luke was aware of the status of his subject at the time of writing. "Many have undertaken to draw upon accounts." Well, what's that about? As far as canonical Gospels are concerned, there couldn't have been more than two written at this time. So John is certainly later, and Luke is writing a third one, if you would like. So what does "many" mean? Probably is not referring to canonical Gospels at all, but referring to the fact that the apostles had been traveling around first in Israel then over to the eastern part of the Roman Empire. So people were excited about what they were seeing and tried to write up what Peter, or Paul or somebody else was saying in a particular place. They heard only a bunch of anecdotes and were not able to put anything together satisfactorily because they didn't have enough information or enough connections; and that's my suggestion of what was going on there.

Luke says that he had studied all related materials carefully himself. He says he studied them "from the beginning," probably a reference to a subject matter rather than that Luke was with Jesus from the beginning. It's possible, but I think not likely. Luke does start with the earliest earthly events; he goes back to the annunciation to Zechariah for the birth of John the Baptist etc. He could alternatively mean the beginning place, Palestine. One can construct a history either by living through the events or by carefully studying their available data later. The usual historical method turns out to be studying the available data later just because not that many people have typically seen a particular thing. Luke is doing this, but Luke, we see, thirdly, used materials delivered by groups designated as eyewitnesses or ministers of the word. These people would obviously include the apostles and other full time workers such as, perhaps, the 70 who were also the eyewitnesses.

The single definite article for the two terms indicates the group was viewed as a unity having both qualifications. I won't push that too hard, but it syncs it into

one group together. Luke probably interviewed many people who were healed or who were present at various locations that he narrates.

My suggestion is that Luke may have also interviewed Mary since Luke has birth material from Mary's perspective. It's possible she is still alive in the 50s being, perhaps, 70 or 80 years old by that particular point. When Luke tells us he wrote up an orderly, sequential, accurate account, that should be an encouragement to Christians. Obviously, all such claims as above make Liberals again rather nervous. This Gospel, we are told, is written in Greek by a trained intellectual Gentile who had personally investigated the testimonies of eyewitnesses is rather striking. The general way to get away from that is saying, "Well, all writers throw stuff like that in the front of their material." But where Luke is testable, he has proved to be quite impressive.

### **Characteristics of Luke**

Here are some characteristic of Luke, or emphases, of Luke's Gospel. There are a number of features we can say that seem to be emphases in Luke's Gospel. I'm going to mention here universalism. Not in the sense of the Unitarian Universalist Church where everyone is going to be saved. But universalism [in] that [the] Gospel is for all kinds of people. It's not just for Jews. It's not just for middle-class or wealthy people, etc. Luke has an unusual emphasis on both Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, men and women, respectable people and outcasts. In fact, with regard to the outcasts, Luke emphasizes Jesus' gracious attitude toward the outcasts of society, towards notorious sinners, lepers, Samaritans, harlots, tax collectors and so forth.

Luke also has a significant emphasis on prayer. More of Jesus' prayers and Jesus' parables on prayer are included in Luke than in any of the other Gospels. Luke has certain emphasis on society relations, especially an interest in wealth and poverty. Why did Luke, what should we say, stress these particular relationships? We don't know. We were not there. Perhaps because these appealed to his

audience. The Greek philosophers of the New Testament period, as opposed to the early Greek philosophers—Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates—were very much concerned with ethics. Many cultured Greeks of the period were also interested in ethics and were unhappy with what they saw. I think of the debauchery of Rome and of the high handed run over the poor people and such, so that may be what we are seeing going on here.

As we sketched some material unique to Matthew, so we sketch some material that's unique to Luke here. Luke first of all, and somewhat surprisingly, as a much more Gentile Gospel, if you like, than Matthew, presents and preserves some Semitic praise psalms. These are in fact very Semitic. Otherwise, the Gospel of Luke is the least Semitic of the four Gospels. The Latin names given for these particular praise psalms are taken from the first words of their texts, and probably translated into Latin from Greek. They represent even a Hebraistic way of naming books and works and things of that sort.

So, there is the *Magnificat* in Luke 1:46-55; Mary is concerned about how she will be received at Elizabeth's house, and she is received very well because Elizabeth already knows about what has been revealed secretly to Mary. John the Baptist jumps in her womb at the greeting of Mary. So Mary praises God, and *magnificat* [is] the Latin for "praise," or "I praise." Then there is the *Benedictus*, Luke 1:68-79, where Zechariah praises God after John's birth. The *Gloria* of Luke 2:14 [is where] the Lord's angels at Jesus' birth sing, "Glory to God in the highest," etc. This is actually a little short to be technically a psalm but would fit nicely with the refrains that frequently occur in the Psalms. Then there is, fourthly, the *Nunc Dimittis*, "Now let your servant depart," in Luke 2:29-32. It is Simeon's prayer upon seeing Jesus. He had been told that he would see the Messiah before his death, and now he has handled the baby Jesus and is ready to depart.

Luke, the Gospel, is not distinctive for having parables in it. All three of the Synoptic Gospels have parables, and the Gospel John has what is effectively the same thing, though he uses the word *paroimia* where he refers to them.

There are two general types of parables in the Gospels, what we might call story parables, which are quite adequately characterized by the phrase “earthly stories with heavenly meanings” that is a two level, often even a secular story here and then a spiritual significance that it has. The Wheat and Tares would be typical of such a thing. The earthly agricultural story of an enemy of a landowner trying to get back at him by messing up his crops, and yet he conveys information on the progress of the Gospel.

Then illustrative parables are also called example parables, or paradigm parables. These are unique to Luke. There is one possible candidate in Matthew, Matthew 12:43-45, and there is definitely an Old Testament parallel to it. But these do not transfer meanings from physical to spiritual, or secular to religious; instead, they picture a sample of the spiritual truth in operation, and we are to generalize the principle by hints in the context. Some examples of these paradigm, or sample parables: the Good Samaritan. Augustine did try to make this into a story parable with the man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho as an Adam/man, etc.; and falling amongst thieves—these ambushed by Satan, and Jesus as the Good Samaritan, and the church as the inn, and he works out some sacramental uses of the oil and the wine. But the context itself indicates, I think, that it is in fact a sample of what it means to be a neighbor, what it means to act as a neighbor towards someone, in publishing the answer to the Pharisee’s question: “Who is my neighbor?” The answer is: anyone who is in need. The principle is “Go and do likewise”; so it is a nice example of a sample parable. A sample of this particular disastrous incident is how to be a neighbor, if you like.

Another example is the Rich Man and Lazarus. This sample of what happens after death. And a particular sample, picks about as poor a man as you can imagine, together with about as rich a man as you can imagine. It suggests that when they die, their statuses are reversed: that before, the rich man is inside his mansion feasting, and the poor Lazarus is outside with the dogs and the sores, etc. And then suddenly, with death, Lazarus is feasting at Abraham’s bosom, just like

John at Jesus' bosom at the Lord's Supper, and the former rich man is outside begging, if you like. Well, there are people who want to make that into a story parable. Jehovah Witnesses definitely do, so they can get rid of the idea of hell and conscious existence between death and the resurrection, etc.

[The] Pharisee and publican [parable] is a sample of pride and humility. The rich fool, a sample of people who make no preparation for the next life. A little bit different, but I would put in the same category the parable of the banquet seats in Luke 14:7-11. A sample of the result of selfishness: a person selfishly tries to grab a great place at the banquet, but it turns out the hostess invited somebody more important than he, and so he gets knocked out by the time all these other seats are taken, and he winds up getting down to the bottom, if you like.

The other one in the same context is the banquet host, Luke 14:16-24, a sample of hospitality. Who do you invite to your banquets? Not all of the rich guys who will pay you back, not all of your friends who will pay you back, but the poor people who can't pay you back. So what's going to happen in the end? Well, God will pay you back, and that's a lot better.

Why is that type of parable unique to Luke? I don't know. Liberals say various circles of tradition invented different types of parables, different types of materials. But this doesn't really solve the problem; there is no reason to believe that there were isolated groups in the early church. Perhaps a better model is that Jesus was inventive and used different types, different styles for various audiences. Luke apparently emphasizes material because he especially appreciated it; it's wealth, and poverty, and things of that sort show up pretty strongly there.

There are some miracles that are unique to Luke; those are miracles usually related to women. Jesus raises the son of the widow of Nain, heals the woman bowed down with infirmity, etc. And then one section that's rather unique, if you like: that's the narrative of [the] Perea ministry. Perea was largely a Jewish region east of the Jordan River, probably largely populated with Jews after the Babylonian captivity, excuse me, after the return from exile, even after the

Maccabean Period, probably.

Well, we give a quick outline of Luke, and now we end our materials on the characteristics of the Synoptic Gospels. Luke has just a short four verse preface, but none of the other Gospels have it quite like that. Maybe there is an inscription on the front of Mark “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus the Christ, the Son of God,” if you like. Luke’s got birth and infancy which parallel, at least in structure and location, that in Matthew, but includes the birth and infancy of John as well. Then the preparation section has got the genealogy in it, whereas Matthew had a genealogy up in the front. Then we have a Galilean ministry and that takes up [the] middle of chapter 4 to about the end of chapter 9. Then Luke has a big section, ten chapters, of the journey to Jerusalem and [the] Perean ministry. The other ones all have about a chapter for the journey to Jerusalem and don’t explicitly mention the Perean ministry. Luke’s got about two chapters on the last week and two chapters on the betrayal, trial, and crucifixion, and one chapter on the resurrection; and those areas parallel the other Synoptic Gospels very strongly.

Well, that’s our quick tour then of the characteristics of the Synoptic Gospels. I think we’ll stop there. Thank you for your attention.

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## Dr. Robert C. Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Lecture 6

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### Parables

#### Review and Preview

We're looking at the Synoptic Gospels course here. So far we've looked at the historical Jesus, Jewish background, introduction to Jesus and narratives, authorship and date of the Synoptics, and we're about here to start on section five: parables. It will start with some definitions relevant to parables. There is some confusion that can arise about exactly what a parable is since the definition used in English literature is not quite the same as the range and usage of the word *parable* in the Greek New Testament. On top of that New Testament parable studies have been messed up for about a century because commentators have unwisely followed Eulicher's claim that parables were quite different from allegories and always only made a single point.

#### Parable, definition of

So let's have a look. If you look in a standard English dictionary, the dictionary definition would be something like this: A parable is a short fictitious story that illustrates a moral attitude or a religious principle. That is not a bad definition. Of course, a parable doesn't have to be fictitious, but we have no way 2000 years later to tell whether any or all of Jesus' parables were fictitious. That a parable is a fictitious [story], however, casts no shadow on the biblical teaching of inerrancy.

The literary definition of a parable is: A parable is an extended simile, whereas an allegory is an extended metaphor. This definition gets us into technical questions as to what a simile is and how it differs from a metaphor. On top of that, it makes a distinction that Jesus and New Testament writers do not make.

The word “parable” as used in the New Testament includes allegories and a number of other figurative genres. For your information, we give the following definitions of simile, metaphor, etc. A simile is an explicit comparison employing words “as” or “like.” For example, “God is like a king.” A metaphor is in implicit comparison not employing words “as” or “like.” For example, “God is a king.”

A parable is a simile expanded into a story showing how some item, person, etc. is like the story, or like some element in the story.

An allegory is a story picturing concepts and such by means of persons or elements with a story named for each concept. So *Pilgrim’s Progress* by John Bunyan is probably the most famous of the English allegories in which the chief character is called Pilgrim; and “Progress” we don’t normally catch today because it’s changed meaning, but a “progress” is a journey. So it is a pilgrimage, or Pilgrim’s journey to heaven, etc. You run into all these characters with different kinds of names, and they represent different kinds of problems and encouragements and such that Pilgrim faces in his journey that Christians will face in their spiritual journey as well.

New Testament usage of the word “parable” is a rather broad genre of illustration including parable—in its narrow definition—allegory, similitude, and sample parable, as well as proverb and paradox. We’ve already defined parable and allegory as used in the sentence in the second definition, the literary definition.

What do the other terms here mean? Well, a similitude is something that is longer than a single simile, but not really long enough to be a story. Think of the parable that Jesus gives to the women that puts leaven in dough until it’s all leavened. There is not much action there. I know her kneading the dough might take some time, but it’s not an action-filled story, if you like. It’s just kind of a sentence almost. In the parable of the mustard seed, just the seed grows until it becomes big enough for birds to rest in the branches—a sample parable we mentioned just

briefly earlier when we discussed characteristics of Luke. It is a story which illustrates some spiritual truth by giving a sample of it rather than by giving an earthly story with a heavenly meaning, as parables more commonly do.

The parable of the sower and the soils is an earthly story about planting seed with a heavenly meaning about the very reception of the gospel. A sample parable, by contrast, is the Good Samaritan, which gives a sample of what it means to be a neighbor.

### **Function of Parables**

We want to think a little bit now about how parables function. We can say lots of things, but we're going to construct it here in terms of two things: first of all, parables are stories. They're designed artistically by the creator of the parable to be interesting and use a number of the standard devices of storytelling. For instance, Amos Wilder, in an article in *Semeia*, pictures parables as stories in a sense that they are brief; so the longest parables in the New Testament are probably something like the Prodigal Son, or something like that, and where it takes up a page of the Bible; whereas a short story typically takes a half a dozen pages at least. So it can be very brief.

Unified: it doesn't go shooting all over the place. It doesn't usually have several plots or anything of that sort. There are a limited number of actors. Wilder mentions the rule of two: chiefly, two principal actors. Not all parables satisfy two principal actors, but an awful lot of them would. Some of them, think of the parable of the Prodigal Son, for instance, your two principal actors are the father and the son, but then there is the other brother, etc. So there is a little bit more going on there.

They typically are characterized by direct discourse. To make the story vivid, you have the different characters speaking instead of the narrator describing what they said, or something of that sort.

A serial development: it goes from beginning to end without taking a few sidetracks here and there to explain other things going on, and that's probably partially just a result of being brief and unified and not having multiple plots.

There's also what's called a "rule of three," and that is that typically parables don't go beyond three items for certain things in order not to complicate things too much. So for instance, in the parable of the pounds, the ruler who's going to a far country to receive a kingdom in return gives pounds of silver to each of his servants. There are ten of them, but you don't get a working out of the thing when you get back. You get a working out of three of them. One guy made five pounds with his, one made two pounds with his, and one hid the stuff in the ground. So the rule of three is a common feature to make the thing memorable and not get too complicated.

Repetition: often there is verbal repetition or thematic repetition in the thing, again to help make it easier to remember. This is characteristic not only of parables, but also of other types of storytelling techniques, like fairytales. That there are three brothers and the one brother goes and does this and this, and this and this, and finally this disaster happens. Then there is the second brother that does this and this, and this and this, and you get a lot of the same words that are used in the previous one, etc.

Binary opposition: there is a clear-cut black versus white perspective. These are not discussions of some difficult psychological problem where you've got all of these grays and nuances and things of that sort, but very typically, very good or very bad. Not always, but again the parable of the Prodigal Son is a little bit more nuanced than that. Is a little bit nuanced in that, although in the lost coin you have nine coins non-lost and one coin lost, and the sheep you have one sheep lost and 99 sheep not lost; in the Prodigal Son you kind of wonder whether both sons aren't lost to some extent. But typically there are very strong oppositions, very strong distinctions between the various characters, or events, or things of that

sort. There's a stress that you often have the final resolution of that shows up quite suddenly at the end of the story.

Often there's a resolution by reversal. This shows up pretty strongly in connection with the parable [of] Lazarus and the rich man where the rich man is now begging and the poor beggar is now feasting.

They're usually two-level: they are usually an earthly story with a heavenly meaning, which I said the only real exceptions of this are these six parables of Luke, which are sample parables.

Parables are stories, so they've got a tight structure to them and these distinctive things that make it easy to see what's going on in that sense.

Parables are analogies, and the best work on this I've seen is a book by John Sider called *Interpreting the Parables*, published by Zondervan back in 1995. He says basically that parables make an analogy between an earthly story and its various features with a heavenly meaning, and its various features and the terminology that's used in literary studies for verbal analogies, if you like. This is the tenor, that is, the heavenly meaning, the vehicle, the means by which that tenor is conveyed—and that's the earthly story. For those of you who get tangled up with complicated terminology, we think of a vehicle we think of [it] as an automobile, or a bicycle, or a motorcycle; it carries the passenger. So here the earthly story carries the heavenly meaning, if you like. Or if you are into paint, the vehicle is the oil or latex base that carries the color and sticks it to the wall. So you have the vehicle, the story, the tenor, what the meaning of the story is, then one or more points of resemblance, which are the analogies that you can make between the earthly story and the heavenly meaning.

Almost all of Jesus's parables are what we call analogies of equation; that is, this is to this equals this is to this. Let's take a look at some of those. Starting with an example from Shakespeare in *King Lear*, Act 4, Scene 1, line 37. Lear is complaining, "As flies are to wanton boys, so are we to the gods." So that's the

vehicle; that's actually both of them. That's the two analogies. Here are wonton boys, which in early English means boys who are mischievous, or something of that sort, and the way they treat flies is analogous to the way the gods treat humans. He actually explains it in the last line, "They kill us for sport." So the boys kill flies for fun, and the gods kill humans for fun. You can see it's not a Christian worldview that Shakespeare is presenting as Lear's view on the matter. So, the tenor, the relation of gods to humans, the vehicle, the way boys treat flies, if you like. Point of resemblance, they kill us for their sport—it said explicitly. So point of resemblance: if you try to construct the point so that it works for both sides of the analogy, it's in respect of how these people are mistreated. So the gods mistreat humans just as the boys mistreat the flies. He shows how that can be diagrammed, and that's not easy to be verbalized.

An example of Jesus' parables is the Wheat and the Weeds, Matt. 13. The story: a man sows good seeds in his field. His enemy sows weeds on top of them. When what has happened is discovered, the man's slave wants to remedy the situation right away by pulling up the weeds, but the owner has him wait until the harvest. So that's the vehicle.

What is the tenor? Jesus tells us that the kingdom of heaven is like this. So Jesus' subject is the kingdom of heaven, and he's telling us about certain features of its future history from the time that Jesus' teaching. There's going to be this analogy between this man sowing good seed and the enemy sowing bad seed, with the discovery and the desire to rip it up, and the owner having to postpone it until the harvest, etc. So the vehicle is the story above. Jesus is telling about the kingdom of heaven, heavenly subject, by means of an earthly agricultural story of an enemy's attempt to spite his neighbor by ruining his crop with weeds.

Point of resemblance: this story has a number of them, not just one. Let's stop and think what they might be. Well, the owner is to the enemy as God is to Satan. Or you can make an analogy between what the owner does. Just as the

owner sows good seed into his field, so God puts sons of the kingdom in the world. Another point of resemblance is just as the enemy puts weed seeds in the field, so Satan puts his people into the same situation. You can actually make a bunch of those sorts of things, but you're probably going to end up with 4 or 5 significant points of resemblance that are going on here. That's basically the picture we have here. That's how a parable functions as an analogy.

I'm going to give you a quick walk through of the parables in the Synoptic Gospels. I will also throw John in here so you can get a feel for that, structured in terms of their content. We will start out with Christological parables; there are a number of those: the strong man defeated in Matt 12, Mark 3, and Luke 11. You have the analogy there as the strong man who can only be defeated by a stronger man, so Satan can only be defeated by someone stronger than him: implication—Jesus. So what's going on here is this demon exorcism, if you like.

There is the rejected stone in Matt 21:14-22: there Jesus was really just commenting on the Old Testament passage—on the Psalm 118 if it is indeed that psalm he is quoting. “The stone the builders rejected, the same has become the chief cornerstone,” and he leaves it to the audience to figure out what the analogy is. Jesus, if you like, is this rejected stone; rejected because it's the wrong shape,. It's not the shape they expect, or something of that sort, would be a speculation; that would be my guess.

The builders represent the powers that be in that state at this particular time, and yet this stone turns out to be the chief stone in the architect's plan. It's the chief cornerstone, or the cap stone, and there have been various ways suggested to handle that kind of thing.

The Christological parable, or the door of the sheep in John 10. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life in John 14. He's the way into the sheepfold and such. The good shepherd is also in the same passage. Jesus the vine dresser,

the father of the the vine dresser in John 15, verses 1 and 2. Those would all be examples of Christological parables. They're mainly about who Jesus is, if you like.

There are the parables lost and found, and that's the lost sheep found in Matthew 18, but also in Luke 15. Then also in Luke 15, the lost coin and the lost son, and they are all doing the same sort of thing. The Pharisees are complaining that Jesus is concerned about all of these wicked people—prostitutes, and tax collectors, and things of that sort. Jesus basically says, "Well, if you owned a hundred sheep wouldn't, you be concerned if one got lost; and when you found it, wouldn't you want your friends and neighbors to rejoice with you?" So God is seeking the lost, and when he finds it, he'd like you to rejoice with him instead of complaining.

Then the lost coin does the same sort of thing, but now using the woman and the lost coin. With the lost son you are kind of sneaking up on the Pharisees and all of these, and now [he] brings in another character, and that is the non-lost son and he has the Pharisees' attitude. I think the attempt here is to get the Pharisees to see themselves as God sees them, whether they do or not. How many of them were there, we don't know. There are the Parables are lost and found.

Parables of forgiveness and mercy: the unmerciful servant, Matthew 18:21-35, is about one who has received all this mercy from his master and then doesn't have mercy on the person that owes him money.

Another one is the day laborers who complain about the fact that they worked all day but some of these only worked just an hour. This illustrates sort of the idea that I want grace but I don't want anybody else to have grace, and I certainly don't want them to get more than I have—[that] sort of thing is lurking there.

The two debtors in Luke 7: which debtor would show more love for the money lender who forgave both their debts? Well, you would think the one that had the larger debt, and Jesus is basically saying, “Well, you know you, Simon, [you] think you’ve got a small debt, and you act like it. But the woman thinks she has a big debt, and she acts like she’s been forgiven a big debt, and she really has been, etc.”

The unprofitable servants in Luke 17: they somehow expect to be treated as no longer servants because they have done these things. He is trying to remind us that in some sense our relationship to God is like that of slaves to a master: that’s what we owe the person. That is not appreciated much in a culture without slavery, but does picture a real feature of the real relationship of God to man.

Parables on prayer: the son asking bread Matthew 7, Luke 11; the friend at midnight, Luke 11; unjust judge, Luke 18; are all on God gives us the gifts that we really need rather than the corrupt ones we think we want. God will reward persistence in prayer. If this widow persisted and got what she wanted even though the judge was unjust, how are we treating God when we give up in something? We are treating God as worse than the unjust judge, if you like.

Parables of transformation: the new patch on the old garment, or the new wine on the old wineskins, showing that something new has come here. These feature the regeneration power of the gospel and that sort of thing.

Parables of stewardship are the parable of the lamp and the bushel; and what’s the lamp for,—it is to lighten a room if you don’t put a bushel over it. A crooked business manager who, what shall we say, gives his master’s debtors a break by reducing their indebtedness. We are both to resemble and be different from the crooked business manager. An unfaithful upper servant begins to lord it over the lower servants.

The Parables of Talents are very similar. Wealth is entrusted to us, and it is our responsibility to use it properly and the dangerous temptation to play it safe, to

hide it instead of working and risking with it. The parable of day laborers we had had earlier somewhere; [it] was a parable of forgiveness and mercy, but also stewardship. A parable of vineyard workers: these people who want to get the vineyard for their own and they are ready to kill the heir. Just, in some sense, as the Jewish leaders wanting to run Israel their own way are ready to kill the messiah when he shows up.

Parables of invitation and rejection: children in the market place and some stubborn, crabby children who won't play funeral [music] and won't play marriage [music], and Jesus and John the Baptist are like that. John is offering [a] funeral, and Jesus is offering [a] wedding, and the crowds are the crabby kids who won't go either way.

Parable of the two sons, the one who says he won't go work in his father's field, then repents and does, and the one who says he will but doesn't do it. [this parable] contrasts the tax collectors and harlots, who started rebellious but repent, and the Pharisees who claim they are really doing God's will, but they never do it.

The great supper and the marriage of the king's son: we are going to look at the marriage of the king's son here by and by, so I will not say further about that. Both of those use the theme that parallels the messianic banquet idea. The offer of the gospel [is] like an invitation to a banquet and [shows] the irrationality of some of the people invited in turning the banquet down.

There are parables of a second coming: the vultures and the carcass. How do you tell where a dead body is out in the wilderness? Well, you can see the vultures circling overhead from a mile or two away. You don't have to be near the carcass. So when Jesus returns, you'll know it; you don't have to be standing right where he comes.

Fig tree heralds summer signs preceding the end, like the new leaves and buds on the fig tree herald the coming of summer.

Householder and the thief show the importance of keeping guard, if you like. Jesus' return will catch you unaware.

Parable of the porter the fellow who needs to be up to open when the master returns from the feast etc. The waiting servants in Luke 12 are similar, and the wise and foolish virgins in Matthew 25, where the wise virgins have extra olive oil with them just in case things take longer than expected. The foolish virgins don't take any extra with them. It does take longer than expected, and they aren't ready when the time comes.

Well, there's a huge list of parables of mourning and judgment. John the Baptist's parable, the axe at the roots, pictures a farmer about ready to cut down a tree, and he's taking a stance; and those of you who have used an axe properly at least know that you set the axe edge against where you want to strike initially to get your stance right, your distance right and everything, and then you draw it back and whack it. Jesus says the axe is already set at the roots, ready for the stroke. You need to, and actually John the Baptist says this, you need to be ready.

John also gives us this warning in Matthew 3:12 of the guy coming to winnow the grain, and his winnowing fan is in his hands. So he's about to carry out the judgment that separates the wheat from the chaff.

We've got the parable of the tasteless salt; parables of fire, salt, and peace; and the advice of Jesus to settle out of court.

The picture of the eye as the light of the body: the way that you see is when your eye is working, so spirituality we need to be able to see spiritual things. Somewhat similar is the idea of the blind leading the blind in Mark 4 and Luke 6, if you like. We want to make sure that whoever is leading us knows what is going on. Another is the idea of doing an eye repair—taking the spec out of another's eye while you've got the log in your eye already.

The wise and foolish builders: the foolish builders build without a proper foundation, and their work is washed away. Wise builders build on the rock, and this comes at the end of Jesus's Sermon on the Mount or Sermon on the Plain. It is basically saying that the people who take to heart what I've said and obey it, they're the wise builders, et cetera.

The empty house in Matthew 12 and Luke 11 are about when the demon has been driven out of someone. It is like when we say squatters have been driven out of a house. It's empty now, [but] you need to fix it up and guard it so it doesn't get refilled by the new set of squatters. I think it is a warning to the nation of the good things that have happened with the coming of Jesus, and that they need to respond.

"Every plant not planted by my Father will be rooted up" is another warning and judgment kind of parable. The barren fig tree is a parable in Luke 13 and, you'll remember, is an acted parable. Elsewhere the same sort of thing is found with the tower builder, thinking in terms of what something is going to cost and taking a resolution, and looking for whether you've got the resources in that situation as well.

The king going to war is a very similar kind of parable. Will a king with only 10,000 men go to war against a king with 20,000? He has got to at least think it through, you know, whether he can do an ambush, or something of that sort, perhaps, to offset the numbers and allow him to win. Anyway, if it doesn't look any good, he had better go and try to make peace rather than fight the battle and get wiped out.

The parable of the wicked tenant farmers is about those who don't want to pay the rent and are going to kill the heir, if you like.

Parable of the sheep and the goats: as the shepherd separates his sheep and his goats, so God, at Jesus's return, is going to separate those who are really his

from those who are not.

We have parables of kingdom: the parables of the sower, tares, the growing seed, the mustard seed, the leaven, the treasure, the pearls, the dragnet, and then at the end of them the old and new treasures of the household being brought out of his house. These are telling us something about the nature of Jesus' kingdom. I have a PowerPoint on that that goes into some detail and suggests that there appears to be a sequence in this whole thing that we're looking [at]: a planting, a growing, a harvesting, et cetera. We're looking at something about the progress of the Gospel, probably, typical [of] the progress [of] the Gospel in different societies and what sort of thing happens there.

The illustrative parables of Jesus: I've said just a word or two about those already in connection with Luke, and I won't say any more except list them for you again. The Good Samaritan, the rich fool, the lowest seats in the banquet, the dinner invitation on who you should invite to your banquet, the rich man and Lazarus, and the Pharisee and the tax collector, all in Luke 10 through 18.

### **Acted Parables**

Then we've got a category we haven't said anything about so far, and they are the acted parables. This is where the person, instead of saying anything—you might get a hint or two—but he does something, and it's something fairly unusual. So most people think that Jesus' cursing the fig tree is pretty unusual; what's that about? Is he impatient or something? Well, it's an acted parable. That doesn't mean Jesus wasn't really hungry and wasn't disappointed that there were no figs on the tree; but the tree did have leaves at the time of year, and the presence of leaves should indicate that there should be some early figs on it. It's basically an acted parable of God's reaction to Israel professing to be righteous, but not showing the fruits of it, if you like.

The cleansing the temple is a very similar parable. And, in fact, it is interwoven to some extent with the cursing of the fig tree, and how it turns out overlaps with the cleansing of the temple. In the cleansing of the temple Jesus is expressing his anger at the misuse of [the] temple; and in an acted parable, I think of God's attitude towards not only Israel's misuse of the temple, but their misuse of their privileges, if you like. As I mentioned once somewhere back earlier in this series, I think that it picks up the Malachi idea of "The Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. Who can abide the day of his coming?" et cetera.

Jesus at 12 in the temple is probably an acted parable of some sort. He is saying something about who he is. His father, his real father, is God, and so you would expect to see him in his father's house, et cetera.

Jesus's baptism is probably an acted parable as well. John who knew Jesus as a child, and certainly knew something about his character, said, "I need to be baptized by you." Jesus says, "Let's do this to fulfill all righteousness." One of your more imaginative reformed theologians of this last century, whose name has evaporated from my mind at the moment, basically suggested that baptism is a picture of judgment as well as cleansing: of pouring out of wrath, or being overwhelmed by God's judgment, et cetera. So Jesus is allowing God's judgment to come upon him to fulfill all righteousness. He doesn't need to be cleansed, but God's wrath is going to be poured out on him, if you like.

Jesus healing on the Sabbath, I think, is kind of again an acted parable, and the remark in Mark 3:1-6 points in this direction. It's telling us something about Jesus. Well, it's telling us something about what the Sabbath is, too. The Sabbath is about redemption, and so healing is about redemption. "The Father has been working on the Sabbath, and so am I." And the Son of Man allusions to the Daniel passage, I think, is "Lord also of the Sabbath." So he is the one who is going to legislate on all of these things. The Ancient of Days has given him the commission to have an eternal, universal kingdom.

Healing with clay is rather interesting when you remember how the guy's vision is healed by Jesus spitting and making clay and putting on his eyes. I think [this] is an allusion to the making of Adam in Genesis, where the Hebrew verb there is the verb from "molding clay." He shaped him as he took the dust of the earth and formed Adam out of it. The term "formed" there in the King James is actually the verb for "to make with clay," as in pottery and that sort of thing. So I think we're looking at that there, and it is expressing something about who Jesus is.

Writing on the ground is not explained for us in John 7:53-8:11. Although there is [a] textual question about that particular incident, I think it's a real event that was known from oral tradition and got put in because it was too good to pass up, or something [like that]. It probably refers to God writing with his fingers on the stone tablets, but that's a guess; but a lot of these things are basically intended to make people think, just like the proverbs are. You know, what's that about? Well, think about it a while, and turn it around, and look at it, and you'll learn something, even if you don't figure out exactly what it's about.

The triumphal entry, I think, is an acted parable. The anointing of Jesus occurs several times in his ministry. He's the anointed one, so these people anoint him, although they're not even thinking about that. His foot washing is something the lowest slave would be assigned to do typically, and Jesus takes the place of the lowest slave because that's what he's going to do: he's going to take our punishment for us coming up, et cetera.

So, this is a kind of the tour of how the parables work, and most of the parables, I think; I tried to get all the parables in the New Testament there in that particular list. I think we'll stop here and come back and pick up one particular parable. We'll look at the parable of Marriage Banquet in Matthew 22, verses 1-14. You'll get a chance to kind of walk through and see how parables function in

this particular case.

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**Dr. Robert C. Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Lecture 7**

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**Parable Exegesis**

We're continuing our course here on the Synoptic Gospels. We are in unit five on parables, and we previously spent a little time looking at definitions of parables and a little bit about how parables function as stories, analogies, or examples. We are going now to take a look at a particular parable, and this would be the parable of the Marriage Banquet in Matthew 22:1-14. We go again with my own translation here and occasionally I will make reference to some item related to the translation.

Matthew 22:1: "And Jesus responded speaking to them in parables again, saying, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is like a human king who gave wedding festivities for his son. He sent slaves to call those who have been invited, call those who had been previously invited, but they were unwilling to come. Then he sent other slaves saying, "Tell those invited: Look, I have prepared my meal. My oxen and fatten cattle have been slaughtered and everything is ready. Come to the feast.'" But some were unconcerned and went away, one to his field, another to his shop. The rest seized his slaves, abused them, and killed them. Now the king became angry and sent his army and destroyed those murders and burnt their city. Then he said to his slaves, 'The feast is ready, but those who were invited were unworthy. Go then to the city gates and invite whomever you find to the feast.' So those slaves went out on the roads and brought in all that they could find, bad as well as good, and the feast was filled with guests. Now when the king entered to observe the guests, he saw a man not dressed in festive clothing. He said to him, 'Fellow, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' Now he was silent, [possibly dumbfounded or dumbstruck]. Then the king said to his attendants, 'Bind his hands and feet; throw him outside in the darkness. There will be

weeping and gnashing of teeth out there. For many are called [or many are invited], but few are chosen [or few are selected].”

They say there are alternative ways of translating that 14<sup>th</sup> verse.

Well, that’s our parable. Let’s try to do a little analysis of it here. This parable is a narrative. So we can attack it with some of the narrative features. It’s got characters in it. It’s got the king, and it’s got the servants. It’s got those originally invited and those subsequently invited. Finally, there is the fellow without the wedding garment. The king does really all the talking here.

Then there are the events. The king prepares a wedding feast for his son’s marriage. The king sends servants to call the invited guests. The guests do not come. The king sends them a second request, and some of these have better things to do; and others mistreat or kill the servants. The king becomes angry sends his army to kill the guests and destroy the city. Then he sends servants out to get replacement guests. They do, though not all these guests are good—we will need to think about that in a little bit. The king visits the banquet hall, finds a guest improperly dressed, and he is thrown out.

The scenes are mostly unspecified, but presumably we are looking at a throne room of some sort where he sends out his servants. Then there is wherever the guests are, and they presumably are in the city. Then there is the banquet hall.

The plots: this actually has more than one plot, I think. One plot, pretty obvious here, is a gracious invitation is rejected, and you might wonder what some of the undercurrents are there. Well, the responses, I think, indicate unconcern and rebellion, and the rebellion is judged. Then there is a gracious invitation to others who actually come but [are] unconcerned, [and this] is judged there also.

If we think of Wilder’s devices for storytelling being brief, this is longish for a parable, but it is short for [a] story. Unified? Yes, but with a somewhat of unusual extension at the end—this shift to this other guest.

Limited number of actors, rule of two: There is the king, the servants, the guests, improperly clothed guest. So there are a fair number of actors, but only two of them actually speak.

Direct discourse? Yes. There is a serial development, except for the armies' activities. So it runs up to where the king sends out his army, and then tells you what happens with the army that burns the city down; but then [Jesus] comes back to the time he [king] presumably sent them out, and has the king send out other servants to bring additional guests to fill the place up.

Rule of three: well there are three invitations; that's not super obvious. Well, there might even be four invitations, but there are three that are obvious. He sends the first servants out, and they're refused. He sends them out again to that same group, and they're ignored or mistreated. Then he sends out a third invitation, which goes to this new group. We get three responses, we might say: the ones who think that they have better things to do; the ones that beat on the servants; and then this one that shows up in the improper garment, if you like.

Repetition? Certainly in the rule of three, with the repeated things, you see repetition of that sort.

Binary opposition? Black verses white: you might see it in the characters. The guests who don't come off looking very good, though we don't have anything here explicitly stated about the good guests; so it's really just the bad guests that we are looking at. In stress of all the harsh treatment of the guy improperly clothed certainly attracts attention at the end. Often parables, as Wilder said, are storytelling actually. So stories, as Wilder said, have resolution by reversal, and we have this guy who is in the banquet hall and then thrown out. So certainly a reversal of some sort is going on there. Usually there are two levels. Well, this one is a two level story. And we'll look at the tenor and vehicle here below, and that will give us a look at the two levels.

Well, this is a parable, and it's not one of the sample parables as we'll see when we start thinking about it. So it is an analogy of some sort. The tenor is already suggested by the opening verse here where Jesus says the Kingdom of Heaven is like a human king who gave a wedding banquet, etc.

This actual opening shows you something else that's fairly common in Jesus's parables, and that's the question of whether—when he says the Kingdom of Heaven or something like this, and then usually he has a noun right after that—and the question is whether you are to identify the Kingdom of Heaven with that noun, the Kingdom of Heaven with the king, or whether you identify the Kingdom of Heaven with the whole story; and you have to look and see which of those occur. You see that both in rabbinic parables and in Jesus' parables that this is like.

Parables, and Jesus's parable that this is like, and sometimes [others], it's the next item mentioned that it's [i.e., Kingdom of Heaven] like; but often it's the whole story. So that's the tenor telling us something about the Kingdom of Heaven.

Vehicle: we are being told this by means of the story about a wedding feast; the principle analogy here, I think you can see, is in the vehicle. There's the king and the major emphasis on those invited, if you like, though the analogy is [that] God is to humans as the king is to those invited. So you're getting what is, in fact, a very common image in Jesus' parables and very common in rabbinic parables: and that is God as king.

Often when you see a king in either Jesus' parables or [in] rabbinic parables, in more than 9 cases out of 10 the king is God. The only parable of Jesus I can think of where that is not the case is: what king is he if he has 10,000 soldiers and is going to meet someone bringing 20,000. Clearly, God is not the king there,

but you imagine *you're* the king and thinking through how you'd handle something like that.

Points of resemblance: I want to structure them here as we would if we were working out [Ron] Sider's detailed points of resemblance. In the story, the tenor you've got [is] the servants calling the invitees, and you ask yourself: "What does that correspond to?" Well, God's servants—so disciples: Christians or something of that sort, and inviting the lost, inviting the people to come to God's banquet, if you'd like. So that's another one of the analogies, if you'd like, or points of resemblance. The response to the invitation, I think, is probably pretty straightforward. That is, they work the same way both in the tenor and [in] the vehicle. In the story—in the tenor—some don't care; they consider going out to their field, or to their shop, or something like that is more important, if you'd like. This suggests to us that some who hear a Gospel presentation won't care; other things are more important to them.

The second response is some persecution, and not much, I think, of that sort has happened yet. When Jesus gives his parable, it's possible that the disciples have been run out of a town or two, something of that sort, but the real persecution doesn't become real strong until after Jesus has been crucified and risen, and the disciples then begin to go out; so the response to the invitation in the tenor, if you like, are some persecuted.

Then a third response is some do come. So just as some of the invitees come to the wedding feast, so some of the people that we call to come to Christ in fact come.

We see some more point of resemblance in the king's response: he brings judgment on the rejecters, and that's really only seen primarily in terms of the ones who respond with beating the servants, and brings judgment on them, and burns down their city, and kills those murderers as it says in the passage. But we

don't see exactly what he does with those who don't care, unless we imagine they're in the same city, but I think that's basically one of these things where in order to keep a parable short, [he] doesn't chase through all of the cases. Just with the parable of the pounds, the story doesn't go after examples 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, or 10 either.

In addition, with the king's response we see that he won't put up with nonchalants, and that's, I think, rather clear in regard to the guy without the wedding garment.

So that's a quick look at the parables, an analogy. It's helpful to look at the background in this sense: what would the original hearers have understood about this particular parable? We will catch more things now coming centuries after the events and seeing how some things will unfold, but what else would they catch in the background? Well, some of it is symbolism. Jesus' parables, like those of the rabbis, frequently make use of common metaphors often taken from the Old Testament. In this parable it's very safe to conclude that the king represents God, and that is obviously an Old Testament picture where God is a great king—says Malachi—and that, as I said, shows up quite standardly in Jesus' parables and in rabbinic parables as well.

So why does God represent the king. It is a common New Testament metaphor, and it fits the flow of the parable, particularly in view of the interpretive hints at the end. Outer darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth show up in several of Jesus's parables and are clearly euphemisms for eternal condemnation. Two other symbols here appear to be the marriage and banquet. So question: how are those used, particularly how are they used figuratively in the Old Testament?

Well, marriage first of all: marriage is often figurative of God and his people. Some examples: Isaiah 54: 5-7, New American Standard Version, "For your husband is your maker," says Isaiah to Israel, "whose name is the Lord of

Hosts, and your redeemer is the Holy one of Israel who's called God of all the earth. For the Lord has called you like a wife forsaken, and grieved in spirit, even like a wife of one's youth when she is rejected, says your God. For a brief moment I forsook, you but in great compassion I will gather you," is said of God as husband.

Israel as the wife—and here a rejected wife—was called back. Hosea chapters 1-3, of course, are very striking active parables of marriage representing a relationship between God and Israel. There the prophet is instructed in Hosea 1:2 when the Lord first spoke through Hosea. The Lord said to Hosea, "Go take a wife of harlotry, and have children of harlotry; for the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the Lord." So then the whole thing about Hosea marrying Gomer and then Gomer and Hosea having children, or at least Gomer has children, and then eventually she runs off with her other lovers, etc. Then she's going to be brought back and spend a time in an uncertain status, not having relations with anybody else, or with Hosea, to represent how God is going to deal with Israel before the events of the end begin to come together.

Ezekiel chapter 16 certainly picks up this idea of God married to his people—a traditional interpretation. Song of Solomon goes in that direction as well.

So that's marriage and that's often figurative of God and his people in the Bible.

So that would have been known to the heirs listening to this; and interestingly, the parables largely about a banquet, but happens to mention it's a marriage banquet which, of course, would be a more important one than many others. Then it also happens to mentions off hand that it is a marriage banquet of the king's son, and nothing more is done with that in the parable but its left there, I think, as an interpretive hint.

Banquet as a figure is not so obvious in the Old Testament but is more frequent in the New Testament and in rabbinic literature. There are a few Old Testament possibilities, however. Isaiah 25:6-8: “The Lord of Hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain.” Where this mountain is, we don’t know. We don’t know where Isaiah is standing when he makes this proclamation. “A banquet of aged wine, choiced pieces with marrow, and refined, aged wine. On this mountain he will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples, even the veil which is stretched over all nations. He will swallow up death for all time, and the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces; and he will remove the reproach of his people from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.”

Well, I’d say that’s pretty clearly eschatological of some sort because it’s picturing God taking away death from the human race, apparently. So some kind of a banquet at the end of the age is pictured there.

In the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, the Shepherd Psalm, some people have tried to read the whole psalm as God being a shepherd and we as sheep; but it looks to me like there is a transition in the middle of the psalm from God as the Shepard and we as the sheep, to God as the host and we as the guest at his palace, the king host.

That is very appropriate for David, of course, because he had been a shepherd when he was young and had sheep, [a] family flock. Then David becomes king, and he has household guests as is fairly common with kings. We actually know the names of a couple of them. The fellow who is Jonathan’s son, Mephibosheth, is brought in to be kind of a lifelong guest and eat at the table of the king. Then after David has fled from Absalom and is coming back, one of the guys from across the river, who had provided hospitality for him, is Barzillai. He is an old man; we don’t know how old that would make him, but he says, “Too old to appreciate the taste of food, and too old to appreciate music and dancing,” etc. So he says, “Take Kimham.” We are not told who that is, but almost certainly that

is his son or grandson or something like that. So Kimham goes to become a lifelong guest in the house of the king. So when Psalm 23 says, “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you’ve anointed my head with oil, my cup overflows,” we’re probably getting a banquet scene in that kind of situation in which David views himself as the lifelong guest in the home of a king, and God is the king and he is the guest.

Just one psalm earlier than that, Psalm 22, the picture there is of the one who is surrounded by his enemies, and that sort of thing. That psalm starts out: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” and the cry of this desolated person. Then it suddenly turns to a psalm of praise in the last, ten verses. The psalmist says, “From you comes my praise in the great assembly; I will pay my vows before them that fear him. The afflicted will eat and be satisfied. All those who seek him will praise the Lord. Let your heart live forever.” It sounds like a vow banquet.

One of the procedures which we don’t deal with a whole lot, but it is mentioned a bit here and there in the Old Testament, is that for a certain types of offerings—the vow offering—a fair bit of the animal comes back to the offerer, and that a person prepares the thing and has a meal for his friends. Apparently, it’s typically in the temple precincts somewhere. Basically, it is a celebratory offering for God answering the person’s prayer for which the vow is a part. If you do this for me, Lord, I’ll do this, etc. So here, apparently, we have a picture of a vow feast, and yet it is going to be news of the deliverance of this person who has been forsaken by God, whose hands and feet were pierced, and who was lain in the dust of death, and whose tongue is sticking to the roof of his mouth, and all his bones, etc. He’s been delivered, and it is going to become world news for generations. It is interesting at the end of that.

So here again is a banquet scene, and it sounds to me like it is eschatological also, so that at least two of these three we are looking at are end-

times banquets. That, I think, is what the rabbis would call the “Messianic Banquet.” That term is now being used in evangelical circles as well. So, it is the marriage relationship of God to mankind, or to his people particularly. The banquet, particularly if it has eschatological connotations, is the Messianic Banquet, etc.

Another possible symbolic element is the garment. So I ask my students in this handout sheet they’ve got for homework: “How are garments used figuratively in the Old Testament?” Obviously, garments are used non-figuratively in lots of ways, but figuratively in a few ways. For instance, if you look at maybe four or five passages: 2 Chronicles 6:41, Psalm 132:16; Isaiah 61:10 and 11, you see garments used to represent salvation. For instance, in the last of these, Isaiah 61:10-11: “I will rejoice greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a gardener causes the seeds to grow up, so the Lord will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all nations.” So it is a picture here of garments representing salvation, [and] righteousness—that sort of thing.

That brings us to the next idea under garments: righteousness. We just saw that one—how’s it go? “He’s wrapped me with a robe of righteousness,” and that also occurs in Psalm 132:9 and Isaiah 59:15-19.

Here’s what Psalm 132:9 looks like: “Let your priests be clothed with righteousness; let your godly ones sing for joy.” Contrast that with Zechariah 3:1-10, where the high priest is dressed in filthy garments, and Satan is accusing him before God; and then God has his garments replaced with good garments, etc. So righteousness or unrighteousness is typically represented by the cleanliness of the garments which, perhaps, could be represented by the color as well.

There are some other uses of figurative uses of garments. Psalm 132:18:

garment representing shame. Isaiah 63:1-6 is a garment representing vengeance. Isaiah 52:1-2 is a garment representing strength.

Another question I ask them [students] in their handout sheet besides regarding these symbolic elements: “Do you see any predictive hints in this parable which are now clearer as we look back hundreds of years later?” Can I suggest that I saw two of them, I think? One, the remark that the King sent his army to destroy their city is now much clearer because we know that Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70. You say, “The Romans are God’s army: aren’t they nasty people?” But that is a biblical theme as well. God sends Assyria in Isaiah 10, and God sends the Babylonians in Habakkuk. But God uses whom he will to carry out those kinds of punishments, if you like.

The other picture of the original guests turning down the invitation and being replaced by a second set is now clearer in view of the official rejection of Jesus by the Jewish authorities over the past two thousand years and the Gospel spreading to other nations all over the world. At the original time when this was heard, people might have thought more in terms of the Pharisees turning down Jesus and poor people accepting Jesus, which was certainly going on then. In the rather parallel parable in Luke of the Great Supper, which is a private citizen rather than a king and such. I think you have that worked out a little more explicitly [of] going into the city to find people to fill up the guest list. Then, not finding them, going outside the city and such, which would perhaps give better that there are two sets of replacement guests there.

What sort of lessons might we find here? It is interesting to try it this way: What were the lessons for Jesus’ original hearers? Then what sort of lessons might we find for early Christians? What sort of lessons might we find for us today who have seen many centuries of church history which the early Christians have not seen?

Well, let’s go back and think about the original audience. You’ve got, obviously, in the ones who go off into their field, into their shop, and the fellow

[who] comes in with the improper garment, the danger of treating God's invitation lightly, [which] would have shown up very much there. In regards to the ones who beat on the servants and kill some of them, the original audience would surely have seen the whole picture of foolishness, on the one hand, and rebellion, on the other hand, in rejecting the king's offer.

Stop and think for a minute. How often have you ever been invited to a wedding banquet of a king? Well, we don't live in a monarchical society, so probably never. Well, how often have you gotten invited to a presidential banquet of some sort? The answer again is probably: zero. Or how often have you been invited to a governor's shindig of some sort for your state? Or even some kind of mayor's reception for your city? I think most of us would have to say never. So it's kind of a once in a lifetime sort of thing. Here that's being offered, and these people go out into their field, and go to their shop, etc. It's [a] very foolish sort of thing. I think the original audience would have also seen it, given they make the connection between king and God: that this is warning of the wrath to come. That certainly already is faithful to the Old Testament background, so that would not be mysterious in this particular parable.

Now, imagine we're early Christians looking at this, and some of these might be before AD 70 and after 70, that sort of thing. Well, there's this fellow who gets in but gets thrown out. Now what's that all about? Well, I'm not sure what message that would have given to the original audience, but to early Christians they're already seeing that the official Judaism of Jerusalem had rejected the Messiah and such, and that there are now a lot of Gentiles coming into the church; and yet who's this guy that doesn't have the garment? Well, the danger of professing Christians treating the invitation lightly.

A question has often come up: Would God have provided the garment? Would the king have provided the garment for this guest, or was the guest expected to have his own garment? I've heard people give very dogmatic answers

on that, but the parable doesn't tell us. You say, "Well do kings always provide garments," and the answer, I think, is: no; but they sometimes do.

So you've got two possible candidates; you've got a "yes," and a "no." If the king provides the garment, then it's easy to see it from Christian theology as this is God's righteousness, which he has provided for those who trust in Jesus; and without that, you aren't allowed into the banquet. How about if it is not looking at the garment as something provided by the king but, rather, something you provide? Well, that's something else; and that is that a person who really is a believer will respond in a certain way in his lifestyle to what the king, what God, has done for him; and he will try to clean up his life, and that sort of thing.

We see biblical warrant for that kind of picture. Think, for instance, of the sheep and goat judgment and what Jesus has to say to those: "In as much as you did these things to these others, you did unto me," and that's not talking about God's grace to the believer, although that's obviously a huge thing; it's talking about our response. So I would say that Jesus has apparently intentionally left that ambiguous in order to read both of those ways.

So, the danger for early Christians, the danger of professing Christians, is treating the invitation lightly either by thinking they don't need God's grace, or thinking they have gotten God's grace and they don't need to do anything. So you might think on the one hand of antinomians and, on the other hand, of people who feel they don't need grace. So both those dangers exist.

There's a hint about [the] Gospel for the Gentiles in this passage as well, and it's quite likely the original audience would not have seen that at all; but Christians looking back a century, or something of that sort, would surely have seen that there's this other set of guests, and who they are and who they might be, etc. And then once you're after AD 70, you see the city has been destroyed, and that [to] the original audience would mostly have been a warning. Of course, if

they would listen to all of what Jesus had to say in the discourse, they would have seen there was a warning explicitly in Jesus' teachings. It was confirmed by the destruction of Jerusalem after 70 AD.

Certainly from AD 30-33, whenever, had Jesus' ministry here on earth extended to AD 70, the Jews might have felt very justified that they had gotten rid of this fake messiah. We've clearly got all this prestige as Judaism, and you guys are the scum that as Paul speaks himself and the apostles being the all scouring of the earth, and that sort of thing. But after 70 AD the whole Temple was destroyed, and Jerusalem is all going down the drain; and things look a little different, although Christians are by no means triumphing even at that point.

Well, then suppose we go on then and think about how would this come across to us today? What sort of things might we see? The front part of this whole thing shows us God's great mercy inviting sinners. Here this king has already invited these people, and apparently the servants know who the invitees are, and presumably the invitees know it as well. Now the servants are coming around to tell the people the feast is ready, is come. That's a little different than our society with e-mails, and invites, and the sort of thing. Where do you get the invitation from, and then you're expected to show up with perhaps some slight uncertainty on when exactly it's going to start due to getting everything ready and such. They send servants around; you can see that in the book of Esther, for instance: the servants coming to get Haman to go to the banquet, etc. Well, so God's great mercy[is] inviting sinners, and then you see man's great foolishness in rejecting his gracious invitation.

You see something else too besides God's great mercy: God's great wrath and judgment; that he comes down on those who mistreated his people and destroys their city and such, but you see also God's wrath and judgment on this other guy that's there but without the right garment.

That leads us to the last point which we ought to be able to see today, and that is professing Christians must not presume upon God. We must not in our preparation for the Messianic Banquet, so to speak, act as though going to our field or our shop is more important, or the kind of lifestyle we're leading and getting ready, and that sort of thing.

Well, that's our discussion of parables. There is lots and lots that could be said. But that's an attempt to take a look at some of that. There's even more that could be said about that particular parable: a very powerful parable of God's mercy, and yet God's judgment, warning of the wrath to come, and the need for humans to make the right kind of response.

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**Dr. Robert Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Lecture 8**

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**Literary Aspects of the Synoptics****Introduction**

We're here in our Synoptic Gospels course. We've looked at 1) historical Jesus; 2) the Jewish background to the New Testament, particularly the Gospels; 3) introduction to exegesis and the narrative genre, and a sample of that in Matthew 2—visit of the Wise Men. We've looked at section 4) authorship and date of the Synoptics, which we also looked at the characteristics of the Synoptics; and we just finished section 5) the genre parables and exegeting them, and looked at the Jesus parable in Matthew 22:1-14; the Marriage Banquet.

We want to turn now to number six in our course—six out of planned twelve topics—and that is the Gospels as literary works. That is, thinking in terms of: what can we learn from the study of literature about how the Gospels function in that way? So, first thing we want to ask ourselves about is the literary form of the Gospels. What is the literary form, or overall genre, of the Gospels? A number of different suggestions have been made in that direction. We're going to look at four of them here, and that is: biography, propaganda, dramatic history, and collections of stories. So that's the direction we want to go.

**Biographical Form**

First of all, biography; obviously, the Gospels are presenting information about Jesus, a person who actually lived in history, so they are certainly biographical in some sense. A number of commentators have pointed out that they're not biography in the modern, scholarly sense. They weren't written to be biographies in the modern scholarly sense. So they weren't written by, what is typically now viewed as, the ideal, uninvolved observer with a detached attitude.

Though lots of modern scholarly biographies are not written by detached attitude either, if you look at them; some perhaps praise items, but perhaps more frequently [they are] a way to undercut or dump on somebody. They're not trying to give all the important dates and facts. A biographer would usually be expected to try and give all the important information that could be known about the person: when he was born, and what we know about his childhood, and all that sort of thing. It does not appear that the Gospel writers are doing that. The biographies, some of them done today, would be personal reminiscences, or character studies or something of that sort; and the Gospels are not primarily that way. We think they do involve personal reminiscences, but they're not structured that way. So the authors do not bring themselves forward, as we've already seen in that direction.

However, the Gospels are really more like biography in the ancient popular sense; that is, how biographies were written in antiquity and how those were written for a broader audience. So, for instance, ancient popular biographies were written with practical concerns, and often used for exhortation of some sort. The author was intending that you should imitate this particular person; or, if he was doing perhaps a series of biographies, where there was good guys and bad guys, that you should avoid imitating this person for one purpose or another.

The ancient biographies were intended to acquaint the reader with a historical person, and we can certainly say that's the purpose of the Gospels in the New Testament. Ancient biographies were intended to give some account of this person's deeds and words without, perhaps, intending to give everything that could be said.

This is what the New Testament does, and what the Gospels are doing. In fact, John explicitly tells us at the end of his Gospel that there's a lot more that could be said. But, this has been said, and this is its purpose that you might believe that Jesus is the Messiah and that you might have life through his name. There is

some resemblance in the Gospels to ancient biographies about Socrates, about the Greek philosopher Epictetus, (second century AD), and about a religious guru we might say Apollonius of Tyana, also from the second century AD. But the Gospels, unlike these ancient popular biographies, concentrate on Jesus' death, and they concentrate on reactions to Jesus. And in those areas, I think, they are unusual as ancient popular biographies go.

I'm still inclined to say that the genre—biography—is, in fact, the closest thing we have in antiquity to these particular Gospels.

### **Propaganda Form**

Some have suggested that the Gospels are propaganda; which, of course, has a very negative connotation, P.R. (public relations) also has negative connotations of sales pitch, hype, etc. Well, the Gospels are seeking to convince the readers that Jesus is vitally important and to move them to respond properly to him, but they lack lots of features that those other kind of labels would suggest.

Propaganda, as the name implies, seeks to propagate certain ideas or attitudes, but it is now commonly a dirty word because it's so often involved playing fast and loose with the truth and giving events a particular spin. It usually also involves working on people's fears or prejudices, or trying to excite emotions.

Interestingly, the Gospels do none of that. They don't try to give the events a particular spin. They typically let you see what Jesus said and what he did, and they point out that they are different kinds of reactions, etc. Doubtless, if a person's already a convinced Christian, they can see that these are bad reactions to Jesus, and these [others] are good reactions. But the writers don't say a whole lot about that.

The Gospel writers are trying to invite a reader response, but it's not mainly a response of just getting you interested in him [Jesus] or admiring him, though

these are certainly involved. Primarily, what they're trying to evoke is a response of faith or trust in Jesus. They aren't really doing that primarily, but what we think of as an altar call, or something of that sort, which you, of course, will see something of that sort in some of Steven's speech; well, maybe not Steven's, but [in] Peter's speech in the Acts, and Paul's speech [it] is there.

The Gospel writers actually are surprising in that they restrain their post-Easter faith in telling the story. So they don't already hint that Jesus is raised from the dead before this, except that Jesus predicts that in a couple places, but He predicts that along with his death in that, and the disciples really kind of aren't ready to hear that whole package. They let the events of Jesus ministry tell their own story rather than giving evaluative comments again and again through the Gospels. Now and then you do have an evaluative comment but there are not a lot of them. So, yes, the Gospels are trying to propagate a trust in Jesus, but they're not doing it in the way that we think of propaganda doing that.

### **Dramatic History Form**

A third suggestion for the literary form of the Gospels is dramatic history. The Gospels are telling a dramatic story of the persons, actions and impact of Jesus, who is a real figure in history. They do in some ways look more like plays in dramatic history than they look like modern narratives. Roland Fry, a literary critic at the University of Pennsylvania, thinks the Gospels should be classed as dramatic histories. He compares the Gospels to the historical plays of William Shakespeare; who, of course, has a number of dramatic histories, and to George Bernard Shaw's play, particularly "That Saint Joan."

Well, one of the characteristics of dramatic history, Fry says, is a dramatic history is essentially a fair representation of events. So it's not something we've got lots of invention to it. It's telling you what happened. A dramatic history is directed to a broad general audience, and it's intended to get them involved. But a

dramatic history needs to cover a lot of ground in a little bit of space, so condensation is very important to attract attention, to hold attention, etc. That, I think, is significant in the Gospels as well; partly, I suspect, for this very reason, and partly because books were expensive in antiquity.

Although Josephus uses seven volumes for his *War of the Jews*, (Jewish War), and 20 volumes for his *Antiquities*, and those volumes would be around the size of a Gospel, the size of a standard papyrus roll, he's writing to a well-to-do audience. Christianity is aimed at a broader audience, which includes people that aren't going to be able to afford those kinds of things. So the average person, I would think, could afford, if they wanted, to put up the money for it—a volume or two, that sort of thing—so typically the Gospels are designed that way. So condensation is important and part of it, I think, to attract and maintain attention, and part of it for these financial reasons.

### **Representative People**

The key practice in dramatic history is to use representative, or sample persons. So this person interacted with all sorts of people: [so] pick a few sample ones of different sorts, with sample followers, sample opponents, and that sort of thing, to use a representative for sample incidences. You're covering the person's life, but you can't cover the detail of a life; it's too complicated, but the purpose then of these representative person's incidence and actions, actions of the person who you're giving the history of, is to give an accurate picture while keeping the length within bounds. And I think that again fits very nicely with what the Gospels are doing.

### **Collections of Stories Genre**

A fourth suggestion is that the collections are the genre, if you like, collections of stories. You can find throughout history places where you have collections of stories of one sort or another. Stories about Robin Hood, or stories

about George Washington, or stories about Abraham Lincoln, etc. And some of these are presumably legendary; some of these are actually historical, but they're a collection of things that do that.

Well, the Gospels are most striking in contrast to modern biographies in being a collection of stories. That is, speeches and sayings of Jesus allow the Gospels to function in a way that a biography, particularly one that tries to uniformly cover the person's life, can't do so well. For instance, by using a collection of stories in putting together [a] biography with the right choice of stories and such, you can make the biography much more action packed than it would otherwise be. So you use numerous brief stories which allow more action than a single, connected narrative where you're trying to follow everything out. There are places in the Gospels where you have [a] single, connected narrative for a day or so, but usually not longer than that.

These collections of stories that represent each Gospel are centered on Jesus, so you look at his person in work, [and] you explain and celebrate what he's done; and there's actually not a whole lot of either explaining or celebrating; that's again a more evaluative sort of thing, and there's not a lot of that.

You can use narrative rather easily than a collection of stories to show Jesus' actions, Jesus words, the response of others to him, and you can actually see [this] with a number of the anecdotes in the Gospels. That some of them concentrate on those actions, and some concentrate on those words, and some of them a major theme, is a variety of responses to him, and that sort of thing. Using a collection of stories allows you to use varied materials as well. There have been a number of people who think that these stories were used independently before they were being compiled. Form critics say these materials circulated independently, and I think there's probably some sense in which that's true. But I would suggest that, rather, they were used independently by the Apostles and other

eye witnesses as they went from place to place as separate anecdotes, but they knew how they went together, and that information was never lost.

### **Narrative Collections**

We find various categories of brief narratives, and you remember Ryken's list above where we looked at all the different kinds of narratives: encounter narratives, and passion narratives, and birth narratives, and controversy narratives, and things of that sort [of thing]. Using a collection of stories allows you, in some of them, to sketch events, and in other ones to detail a particular event [that] allows you to have dialogues, alternating with discourse where just Jesus is speaking and things of that sort.

Likewise, in the way the Gospels are put together you have the words of Jesus, and some of those are just brief sayings—almost sound bites: “The blind leading the blind,” “Pay back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.”

Others are extended discourses, like the Sermon on the Mount or the Olivet Discourse. Others take parabolic form, and so that allows you to get a lot of variety and see some different perspectives on what Jesus was like, and what he taught, and what He was doing.

### **Concluding Statements on Different Form Interpretations**

So that's a little discussion of the genre. Coming down on that and trying to pull things together, I would say the Gospels are basically biography. They function a little bit differently, even probably, than ancient biographies in having this sort of story feature to them of the individual incidents. So you will see some of that in ancient biographies, and the Gospels are seeking to get people to believe in Jesus, but otherwise steer clear of the general sort of things that we see in propaganda. They do resemble in some ways dramatic histories where you are

showing and allowing a person to grasp in a short period of time the drama of what is going on in Jesus' coming and such.

### **Gospel Techniques**

We turn to think a little about the techniques used in the Gospels, and I'm going to give you a series of techniques here. Let me see how big it is--just six I guess. First of all, we see one of the Gospel writer's techniques is restraint and objectivity. The Gospels are unusual and unlike even most ancient biographies in this: and that is the authors let Jesus speak. They don't try to persuade or influence the reader by what we have been calling "evaluative comments." The only technique they use in this direction is the selection of an incident. So by emphasizing certain incidents and not others, they can draw your attention to what Jesus claimed and how people reacted to it, and things of that sort.

Secondly, we have concise, compressed accounts in the Synoptic Gospels especially. That is, even in contrast to the Gospel of John, mostly incidents are a single scene with a couple of actors, often a group acting as a unit. Those are characteristics of storytelling, if you like, and they're told with very economical use of words. John's Gospel tends to work with fewer accounts—but with longer, more detailed accounts—and less of that kind of technique.

Thirdly, besides restraint and objectivity and concise compressed accounts, the narration is very concrete. Brief accounts can very easily become bland if they're general summaries; and if you say, "Well, Jesus spoke for a while on the end of the age," or something like that, you know you're kind of saying something, but you're not telling a whole lot. This danger can be avoided by the presentation of specific incidents using short, vivid descriptions, kind of like an artist's sketch where an artist can give the appearance of a person with only twenty lines or so.

Whereas, if you were trying to make —what shall we say—a graphic of it, you might need a thousand pixels or something. So the Gospel writers use specific incidents: short vivid descriptions and direct discourses. The person speaks [whether it be] the opponent or the person seeking healing; or someone speaks instead of the writer spending some time trying to characterize who it is; [but] occasionally he does do that. So there is a little characterization of the demoniac who has been living in the caves, etc., and that sort of thing, but not a lot of that. A characterization is often provided by the actor's words and actions in that particular incident rather than by the Gospel writer's specific statements.

A fourth technique is selection of materials. The authors apparently have a broad range of incidents they could have selected from. They pick out the ones that they're going to recount, and then they think in terms of how they'll use it. So without actually using evaluative words, the author can communicate his emphasis by the amount of space he devotes to a particular incident or particular item in that incident: whether he chooses to use dialogue or some kind of summary statement, and what expectations he raises in the readers mind. So there is a selection of materials. You remember again: John tells us, you know, "Jesus did all sorts of things but these have been chosen, selected, etc., that you may know...."

A fifth technique is variety. The author groups his materials in various ways, sometimes alternating Jesus actions with his words, miracles with controversy, followers with opponents, and this helps keep the attention of the reader; or if it's read aloud, it helps keep the attention of the listeners.

A sixth technique is sampling. The Gospel writers apparently give samples of Jesus speech and actions rather than trying to give a full report. These are typically samples of the types of miracles Jesus did, the various kinds of people he interacted with, the sorts of opposition he faced, and the kinds of speeches he gave over various occasions. So some of the techniques here—and a lot of this goes

back to Leyland Ryken—restraint and objectivity, concise compressed accounts, very concrete narration, selection of materials, and variety sampling.

### **Jesus' Speeches**

We'll say a few words about Jesus' speeches; [that is], some of the typical features of Jesus speaking as they show up in the Gospels. Ryken, I think again, says Jesus speeches are characterized by being aphoristic, poetic, patterned, subversive, a fusion of genres, and structured. Let's kind of walk through those kind of quickly, and think a little bit about that.

*Aphoristic*: you may not be familiar with that term; it means “short,” if you like. Jesus' words are typically brief, almost like modern sound bites. That struck me. I gave a talk once on sound-bite theology: how Jesus was able to convey important theological concepts in single sentence. Jesus' words are typically, brief almost like modern sound bites, but Jesus' words are made memorable by structure and word play. You get a lot of sound bites today watching TV news, or something of that sort, but a lot of it you have forgotten about a day after they were said. Jesus' technique is to use structure; so you've got parallelism and various things like that, hyperbole and things like that. So word play of some sort allows us to remember some of Jesus' sayings. Jesus' words are often proverb-like: “Do not judge, or you too will be judged”; or “If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch.”

Jesus' speech is poetic. Remember that Hebrew poetry is not rhyming, and if it was metric, we haven't gotten a good handle on what the meter is. Jesus often uses Hebrew parallelism. He uses concrete images, and that kind of imagery [is] of something very specific rather than something very abstract, which is a characteristic of poetry. He uses metaphor, simile, paradox, and hyperbole: “It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter Heaven.” It kind of sticks in your mind, if you like.

Jesus' speech is patterned with lots of repetition: "You've heard that it was said, but I say unto you..." He uses that about five times in setting out what constitutes real righteousness as opposed to what we may call fake righteousness, or cheap grace, or something of that sort. He balances the lines, and that again comes back to parallelism of some sort. Here is an example of repetition and balance. "Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you."

A fifth characteristic, again Ryken here, of Jesus' speeches is they are often subversive. Some people have used that in rather unsatisfactory ways. But Jesus attacks our everyday way of thinking. He undermines our conventional values. Jesus doesn't undermine the real values of the Bible, but he does often undermine the way they have been dumbed down, or watered down, or something of that sort, among people who are merely conventionally religious. Take the Beatitudes, for instance, as a way that undermines our everyday way of thinking. "Blessed are the poor." Who generally thinks the poor are blessed? It is certainly not a standard way of thinking. "Blessed are those who mourn." We generally try to stay away from people who mourn, if we can. "Blessed are the gentle," etc. and the King James Version "meek," In the age of self-assertion, meekness generally does not go very far. And yet Jesus says, "It is the poor in spirit to whom the kingdom of heaven belongs," if you like; that the ones who mourn will one day be comforted. "The ones who were gentle will inherit the earth." It is not the powerful and the assertive [who] are the ones who will inherit the earth. So the way that society in general thinks of getting ahead, whether it be in modern societies or ancient societies, are undermined by these particular things.

Jesus often in his speeches brings together a number of different genres. Ryken suggests, for instance, that the Sermon on the Mount starts out with beatitudes—"blessed" statements—which characterize some of the Psalms. There are nine of those at the beginning. They give some character sketches; remember

that of the hypocrites fasting, if you like, is a nice example of a little character sketch. He uses a proverb, “Judge not, or you too will be judged.” He uses satire: the idea of doing eye surgery with bad vision by the guy with the log in his eye. He uses lyric type things: “You are the light of the world.” Parable: wise and foolish builders; and prayer: the Lord’s Prayer. So we see a bunch of genres brought together in a pretty short speech which would be very unusual for sermons and such, today by pastors and such.

Ryken says the sermon as a whole is utopian literature. There is no society like this on earth, although, I think Jesus’ hint is: this is what my followers should seek to produce—a society like this. It’s an inaugural speech, so to speak. Jesus is sketching what he wants his kingdom to be like, and what he as king is going to do to move in that direction. The Sermon on the Mount is wisdom literature; it has many structures that fall along that direction.

Lastly, Ryken suggests that Jesus’ speeches are structured. They are simple. They’re very artistic. That was something that struck me personally very much taking courses at Duke—Old and New Testament history; and then at Penn in a couple of things, one of which was about Jesus. You got the liberal position often is that Matthew, or whoever was the compiler of Matthew’s Gospel, had a bunch of sayings of Jesus, and he kind of crammed them together, etc. But it struck me: No, they [sayings] are too organized—there’s a genius in their organization; there’s a genius in their content, etc. and so, are we going to replace Jesus; who is the most likely candidate by some unknown geniuses in history of the early church in the first century for that matter? I think not.

Highly artistic, single themes, or threefold example, often are part of the structure, if you like, of Jesus’ speeches. Here’s what Ryken says in *Words of Life*, pg. 120: “The artistry of the design is apparent. There’s no reason the sermon as it

stands could not be exactly the form of Jesus' longer sermons took." So, I think he has something of the same reaction there.

Well, one reference here, as we close this section, and again more could be said on the Gospels as literary works, but Leland Ryken has done much of this work that has been done from an Evangelical perspective. See his *Words of Life, a Literary Introduction to the New Testament*, and then that was expanded to the whole Bible in *Words of Delight*. So it's got an Old Testament section, and then this *Words of Life* was incorporated in it. Also Ryken was one of the major editors of the Inter-Varsity Press reference work called the *Dictionary [of] Biblical Imagery*, and that has got some very helpful material in it as well.

### **Conclusion and Preview**

Well, I think that finishes up what we want to try and cover for today. So we now have worked our way through six of our twelve sections of our Synoptic Gospel course, and we have six more to go. Let me just sketch those for you here, and then we'll quit. We've already looked at historical Jesus, Jewish background, introduction [to] exegesis, and the narrative genre, authorship, and the date of the Synoptics, including their characterizations, exegesis of parables, and the Gospels as literary works.

Here in the future, Lord willing, we'll look at the Synoptic Problem. What's the relationship between Matthew, Mark, and Luke; the geography of Palestine and of Jerusalem; the genre of miracle accounts and how to exegete them, and the theology of the Synoptics. We will think of the biblical theology of the Synoptics, thinking how the Synoptics structure their theology; what kind of terminology do you use; what's their emphasis, if you like. Then how to interpret controversy accounts. Then finally, we will wind up with form criticism, and redaction criticism. Thank you very much.

Transcribed by Josiah Lero and edited and titled by Andrew Bugden  
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## Dr. Robert C. Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Lecture 9

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### Synoptic Problem

We're continuing our course in the Synoptic Gospels. We've looked at six topics so far. The Historical Jesus, Jewish Background, introduction to acts of Jesus and the narrative genre, authorship and date of the Gospels, parables and the parable genre, the Gospels as literary work; and we come down to topic seven, which is the Synoptic Problem. So let's have a look at that.

What is the Synoptic Problem? Well, "synoptic" means "working together." The first three Gospels are very similar to one another as though looking at the life of Jesus from the same perspective, especially when compared to the Gospel of John. And yet they also have a number of puzzling differences. The problem, as it's generally raised, is, "What is the relationship among the first three Gospels that will explain what makes them so similar and yet significantly different.

We expect reports concerning historical events to be similar, but the histories of Jesus are unusual. In over three years of ministry, involving many long speeches, only a few hours of speeches are recorded. While hundreds were healed, and we see that number in some of our verses, only a few healings are recorded individually. The same ones are generally mentioned in the various Gospels. Those who reject the inspiration of Scripture, inspiration of the Gospels, say, "The similarities are due to copying, and the differences are due to changes made intentionally, all because the authors were unaware of each other." Well, what we will look at first of all is the phenomenon of the problem, and then we will do a little bit of the history of the problem, and then we will come up with some suggested solutions. Finally, we will suggest the one we think works best.

First, we start with verbal agreements and disagreements as found in the Gospels, and what I have here basically in my notes is the parable of the sower in Greek with Matthew in one column, and then Mark, and then Luke. So then you can see the similarities and differences. I'm not sure whether we want to walk through all of this. It's a little over a page and a half, but, for instance, the parable starts out, "Behold, a sower went out to sow," something of that sort. And Matthew and Mark have the *idou*—the "behold"—at the beginning, but Luke does not. They all three have exactly the same verb, the same person, and the same tense, and all of that. They all call the sower "The Sower," although the "the" there is probably what we think of as a generic use of the definite article. Then to handle "to scatter seed," Matthew does it with a definite article in front of an infinitive, but he uses a present infinitive. Mark doesn't have the definite article, and uses an aorist infinitive. Luke uses an aorist infinitive, like Mark, but a definite article like Matthew. And Luke adds, "To sow his seed," so he adds a little phrase of actually three words in the Greek. All of them then connect the next clause with a *kai* ["and"], and Mark has an addition, "And it came to pass," whereas the others just go on, "And while he was sowing," *en to speirein*, is what all three of them use at that point. One of them adds, "While he was sowing."

Then we begin to get the different cases here. Matthew, some of it—well I'm going to have to get up close to it to read the Greek here—"Some of it fell beside the road." Matthew has, "One of them fell beside the road."—"path," would work as well. Luke has, "One of them fell beside the path." So we're going to see through the cases that Matthew used the plural for each case: so, some seed." And Mark and Luke kind of use a representative, "one seed fell here, one seed fell there," etc.

Well, I think it won't be terribly—what shall we say, edifying—to plow through the rest of that, but instead I'll give you a little short summery that Henry Alford in his *Greek Testament* gives of this kind of phenomenon. He says,

“The phenomena presented will be much as follows: first perhaps, three, five, or more words identical, then as many wholly distinct, then two clauses more expressed in the same words, but different order, then a clause contained in one or two and not in the third Gospel, then several words identical, then a clause not only wholly distinct but apparently inconsistent, and so forth; with recurrences of the same arbitrary and anomalous alterations, alterations, coincidences, and transpositions.”

So basically we see something that is rather puzzling when looked at on the word by word level. We can try to convert this merely anecdotal evidence to numbers by giving statistics on verbal variation within the Synoptic Gospels only in those sections where they overlap, and noting the frequency of identical and different wording.

Agreement for verbs means they have the same tense, not merely the same root. Phillip Schaff, in his *Church History*, gives statistics for this. He basically gives the three books, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and then a call on the number of the unique words, or percentage of the unique words, and then the percentage in which the one Gospel agrees with both the other two, and the percentage on which it agrees with one of the other two. And they look like this: Mark has 40 percent unique words, Matthew 56 percent unique, Luke 67 percent unique.

We move over to agreement with the other two: Mark, in 22 percent of its words, agrees with both Matthew and Luke. Matthew, in 14 percent of its words, agrees with both Mark and Luke. And Luke, in 12 percent of its words, agrees with both Mark and Matthew.

Then agreement with one of the other, but here not specified which one of the other two it agrees with. Mark agrees with one of them 37 percent of the time, Matthew 30 percent of the time, and Luke 21 percent of the time.

What you can see pretty clearly is that Mark is more like the others than the others are alike to each other. So, that basically [is] the picture you get there: if you think about the order of events, the order of events in the Synoptic Gospels is mainly the same as can be observed in *The Harmony of the Gospels* by Robertson, and just going through it and seeing that virtually all the time each Gospel has successive sections in the “Harmony.”

However, there are some differences. For instance, the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law, section 43 in Robertson, is in Matthew 8, Mark 1, [and] Luke 4. The healing of a leper, which is two units down, is a little early in Matthew, but it’s later in Mark than Luke. So the question would be, “Well, which one did Jesus really do first,” and the answer is we don’t have time machines. So we’ve got the data we’ve got here. Mark and Luke have one order, but Matthew has the reverse, presumably one or the others is not in chronological order.

Well, narratives don’t have to be in chronological order; you can use topical order. Narratives [that] regularly come through their prime chronological order, if you like, will diverge to pick up [a] new character coming in, and maybe give you a little background on the character. Then he comes into the narrative, and then when a character leaves the narrative, they may say something about what he did.

So with the demoniac we will see something about [this] when we do that passage. After he [demoniac] is first introduced in the narrative, there is said a little bit about how he got that way. It’s not a whole, but a little history that the people had given up trying to restrain him, and then, when he’s dismissed at the end of the narrative, it says he went off into [the] Decapolis and told the people what the Lord had done for him; so that is a common enough feature and such.

Within a narrative of a given incident, we will sometimes see differences. So the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness in Matthew and Luke switch the second and the third of the temptations, if you like. In the Lord’s Supper, was the cup given first as in Luke? There was a textual problem there, however, and so it

may be that they were either looking at more than one cup, and anyone who knows at least the current Passover... there were, in fact, four cups in the service. Which of these Jesus used as the one for the cup that shows up later in the Lord's Supper, I don't know. Some of the problems which arise are in the trying to discern the order of events in the Synoptic Gospels – if there are textual variants, which there often are, which is the correct text?

Then, when you've got two similar events, if you like, are they really describing the same event or are they describing two different events that were similar? For instance, one we've mentioned already but didn't say much more about: Is the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 the same as the Sermon on the Plain in Luke? Well, a mountain is not the same as a plain, but those names are kind of invented, and someone suggested that Jesus came down from the top of the mountain to a flat place - somewhere on the slope, and that's where he gave his sermon, et cetera. So are these two different reports of the same occasion, or are they similar sermons on different occasions? Again, without a time machine, how can we be sure? What should we do with that?

Your more radical interpreters say that two cleansings of the temple are the same event, but one of the Gospels got it wrong... you get that kind of thing very frequently in more liberal commentaries. Agreements in the order of events in which Matthew and Luke agree against Mark are very, very rare compared with other combinations; and this, then, is used to argue against certain solutions to solve the problem.

### **Accounting for Overlap**

A third thing to consider is the overlap in uniqueness of content among the three Gospels, and this is most easily done by what mathematicians call a "Venn Diagram" where you have two, or three, or four, or five [overlapping] circles. For this one we have three circles where a circle represents Matthew, a circle

represents Mark, a circle represents Luke; and you have it set up in such a way that the circles have a region in which all three overlap. The three form a sort of blossom-like, petal-like sort of thing in which two overlap and then [three], so the three form a sort of—somewhat—moon-shape things in which each circle does not overlap either of the others.

If you look at that, then you can put numbers in it, and that's what I've done using J. B. Tyson's *The New Testament and Early Christianity*, which has a chart of that sort. So in the outer section here, there's stuff that's only in Matthew, stuff that's only in Mark, and stuff that's only in Luke. Tyson does it by verses, which is not totally satisfactory because of verse divisions - whoever made the verse divisions made them so they don't always correspond exactly. But he says, basically, Luke has the biggest uniqueness. He has five hundred verses that don't occur in either of the other Gospels. Matthew has two hundred and eighty, and Mark has fifty. Then the complete overlap, all three of them together - there are about four hundred and eighty verses of that. Then Matthew and Mark overlap in about a hundred and twenty besides that four eighty. Matthew and Luke overlap in about one hundred and seventy. And Mark overlaps in about twenty. So that's one way to see this.

Allan Barr, in a work called *The Diagram of Synoptic Relationships*, does this with colors, and he does a long strip in which you have red and yellow and blue, I think it is, to show where the different Gospels show up. It allows you to see where there are clusters of that, and where that is spread out, and things of that sort.

Early in the church, a church father named Ammonias had devised sections, if you like, [he] divided up each of the Gospels into sections; we don't know how early that was - it was before Eusebius. Eusebius used these to try to sketch for us which Gospels have overlapping material... where the Gospels have overlapping

materials. So he took these sections that Ammonias had made, and he looked at the sections in Matthew and said for this particular section, “Does this overlap with either Mark or Luke?” And he was doing it for four Gospels, so for John as well. And then he put the ones with the same kind of overlap into headings and a list so that he made them into what are called the “Eusebian Canon” or the “Eusebian List.” And List 1 listed all the sections in which all four Gospels overlapped; and then Canons 2, 3, and 4, or List 2, 3, and 4, list the places where the three Synoptics overlapped, the place where Matthew, Luke and John overlapped, and where Mark, Luke, and John overlapped. And then 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 listed the overlaps by twos; and then the last list, lists 10a, is all the stuff that’s only in Matthew, 10b all the stuff that’s only in Mark, 10c only in Luke, and 10d only in John.

Well, when you look at those lists, he then has the number of entries in each of those. So for instance, there are about seventy four entries in which all four gospels overlap; that is, each have about seventy four sections that overlap altogether. Then the second list is what we call “Synoptics,” and they have a hundred and eleven overlaps; and the other ones by threes, Matthew, Luke, and John has twenty-two. Matthew, Mark, and John have twenty five, and the fourth possibility has none. So it doesn’t get a list, and that would be Mark, Luke, and John; so it would be zero, if you made a list for it. Then the same kind of thing happens with the pairs. Matthew/Luke is the biggest list – eighty two. Then Matthew,/Mark – forty seven. But Mark/John – very small. Luke/Mark – thirteen. Luke/John – twenty one. Then Mark/John is missing.

So if I try to summarize those, it looks like this. Let’s see how I did that. Looking at the phenomena of overlapping uniqueness in these lists, two possible combinations don’t appear from the list – Matthew, Luke, and John is unmentioned, and one set of two, the Mark/John, also does not occur. The Canons 2, 3, and 4, in which the overlap is exactly three Gospels, you can see where you

get the name “Synoptic” from. That’s the one that’s got all of those; and the overlaps with John, on the other hand, are much smaller.

### **Q Source**

Then you look at the ones that occur in exactly two Gospels Matthew/Luke dominates and Matthew/Mark is second. Matthew/Luke would be what the writers later come to call “Q”: The stuff that’s in Matthew and Luke but not in Mark. Some may have overlap. Almost all of Mark is found in either Matthew or Luke. Matthew and Luke have much in common and not in Mark. Inside the “Q” material—and this so-called “Q” material is mainly discourse material—only one narrative of the temptation of Jesus shows up on that. Then Matthew and Luke each have a good deal of material each, whereas Mark has rather little of that.

### **Synoptic Problem: Attempted Solutions**

So that’s kind of a quick sketch of the phenomena. You have this peculiar verbal variations which, if you imagine it, [due to] copying; then somebody was doing some complete, considerable editing in the copying. Then you have the matter of order, and the order where it is generally quite the same, yet once in a while you have something that differs to that. Then we have which things are included and left out that you can see where the ideas in the two document theory where you can look at where the “Q” idea comes from, if you like.

Let’s do kind of a sketch history of the Synoptic Problem here. Something of the problem was recognized as soon as the second Gospel begins to circulate, perhaps as early as the sixties [AD]. When you have got one Gospel out there, you can argue about it, and the opponents dislike it; but when you get two who start making comparisons, and those who are opponents can and begin [to] start to use one Gospel against the other to attack Christianity. That, in fact, is what the pagan fellow Celsus does in his work: *The True Account*. It sounds like one of those things you see around Easter every few years where somebody’s trying to debunk

the Gospels. The heretical attacks against Christianity in that particular line setting one Gospel against another motivated Christians to try and solve the Synoptic Problem, and we are going to sketch some attempts of that.

The earliest one we know about is Tatian's *Diatessaron* which was, perhaps, put together around 170 AD. Tatian's procedure is to create a "Woven Harmony"; that is, he takes the four Gospels and makes one narrative and basically no repetition in it. So, he selects material out of any of the four Gospels and weaves them together in the way he thinks it goes. So he takes all the accounts and edits them into a single narrative.

The second one we know about is *Canons of Eusebius*, so from sometime before about 340, where Eusebius used Ammonias' divisions, but makes these lists that we noted above, and makes these tables that index parallel accounts. And in the manuscripts of a lot of early Gospels you have a little notation over in the left side that tells you the section number for this particular thing—the sections were longer than verses but shorter than chapters—it tells you the number, and the number tells you what *Canon of Eusebius* this section is in. If you know what the canons represent, you can immediately see there are two parallels to this and you can go find Eusebius' list which, by the way, is published in front of *Nestle's Greek New Testament*, and find the other two parallels; then you can go look them up, and that is basically the way the *Canons of Eusebius* work.

The first book length discussion we know about is Augustine's *Harmony of the Evangelists* written about 400 AD. He makes the first attempt to go incident by incident through the Gospels and suggests how to harmonize them. So he basically starts I believe with Matthew, and he goes through all the passages in Matthew where there are parallels, and then discusses the parallels and differences and suggests how to harmonize, [and] that sort of thing,. Then he goes back and picks up the ones that don't overlap with Matthew.

Augustine is the first to suggest how the Synoptic Gospels arose. It is a version which later becomes known as the “Successive Dependence Theory” in which one Gospel is written first, and the second one makes use of it, and the third that’s written makes use of the previous two. In the Augustine theory, Matthew is written first, and then Mark makes use of it; and Luke, when it’s written, makes use of both of them. So it’s Matthew, Mark, Luke—Successive Dependence Theory.

Well, shortly after Augustine’s time, military and economic disaster struck the Roman Empire. Literacy drops drastically. Some estimate it may have been as high as 80% before the disaster, and as low as 5% afterwards. [This occurred] over a period of roughly 200 years, 300-500 AD. This type of study, the Synoptic Problem, was really not resumed until the Renaissance and Reformation period.

So, we’ve got Tatian’s *Diatessaron*, The *Canons of Eusebius*, Augustine’s *Harmony*, and now we come to Reformation harmonies. With resumption of academic biblical studies in the Renaissance and the Reformation, attempts to harmonize the Gospels resumed, and [so did] rethinking the sort of work Augustine faced of how to make a decision: when to treat two similar events as the same event or two different events. You have fairly widely divergent solutions comparing the “lumpers” and “splitters.” You had people who tend to put together anything that looked fairly similar, and you had people who, if there was anything different, they would make it separate.

### **Modern Approaches to the Synoptic Problem**

Well, we’re going to continue on with more recent stories. These pick up around 1780 and come down to the present. The earliest of these is the so called “Primitive Gospel,” or *Ur-Evangelium*, [which] is just German for “Original Gospel.” This was proposed independently by Lessing in the 1780’s and Eichhorn a little bit later. Basically, the idea is that there was one original Gospel. The Ur-Gospel, the original Gospel, and generally that is seen to be in Aramaic. Then

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all extracted material from that and translated it to Greek. So similarities between the Synoptics are due to all three using this Ur-Gospel, and differences arise when they edit or translate that Original Gospel differently. This is the Ur-Evangelium theory—The primitive Gospel theory.

Then we have the “Successive Dependence Theory,” which had been proposed a century before by Augustine and is now revised by Hugo Grotius; and in its most general form you have one gospel, then the second gospel makes use of it, and the third gospel makes use of those. These kinds of models were very popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and interestingly, every possible order was suggested at that time. By Theissen and Alford in their discussions of the Synoptic problem sketched that—proponents by those varieties.

It’s still used today by some—the Augustinian Successive Dependence Theory is the one we mentioned earlier: Matthew first, Mark second, Luke third. Another one that’s been rather influential is the Griesbach Hypothesis, which is Matthew first, Luke second, and Mark third. We’ll come back and say a word or two about that in connection with the Synoptic Problem. Then the third one which is, perhaps, a little less common than the others, the Markian Hypothesis, which is Mark first, Matthew used it, then Luke used both of them—Successive Dependence theory.

Another 19<sup>th</sup> century theory was the so called [the] “Fragmentary Theory” proposed by Friedrich Schleiermacher. Basically, his suggestion is that there were a lot of written fragments, a lot of written anecdotes, floating around in the early church, and Matthew, Mark, and Luke each independently made collections of these and put them together into their Gospels. So for a diagram, you have lots of little fragments up here with arrows going down to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke down at the bottom.

A somewhat similar idea comes from Westcott and Alford who are relatively conservative compared to a lot of these guys. They basically suggest an

oral tradition theory. That is, that oral sources lie behind the three Gospels, and they independently made use of the oral traditions and wrote them up; so you have a cloud of tradition instead of written fragments coming down to Matthew, Mark, and Luke at the bottom. They're basically saying these common, basic Synoptics are entirely oral. The apostles who were present when the events occurred unified the oral traditions and its continuous written narratives, and the traditions themselves came directly from apostles. That's been a very conservative version—at least in that particular way of stating it.

The one that has come to be dominate up to the present is what's called the "Two-Document Theory" it was proposed by Eichorn, Bernard Weiss and H.J. Holzman in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and is the dominate theory today. The idea here is that Mark is one of the two sources of Matthew and Luke, and the other source was a written source which picked up the name "Q" in the theories. There is actually some debate today where the name Q comes from. The commonest idea is that it comes from the German *Quelle*, "source," and that apparently has not been verified by any strong proof. It is interesting that that kind of information could get lost that quickly. Q and Mark, or Ur-Mark, or Original-Mark, are seen as the sources and Matthew and Luke had accesses to each of those sources, but they did not know about each other; so Matthew uses Q and Mark, and Luke uses Q and Mark.

### **Problems with the Q Theory**

The scheme is hypothetical because there was no surviving Q manuscript. The Q has also sometimes been called the "logia," that was A. T. Robertson's favorite term for that based on the assumption that this is what Papias was talking about. when he spoke of the "logia, which each translated as he was able." Another name that is commonly used is a "saying source." As we suggested a little bit earlier, the overlap of Matthew and Luke that doesn't include the Mark material does look like it's largely words of Jesus rather than narratives, so that

term “saying source” is sometimes being used. As for some material in Mark, which is unique to Mark and not in Matthew and Luke, some proponents have said that Matthew and Luke used a proto-Mark, or an Ur-Markus, an Original-Mark, that was later edited into the modern Mark.

Well, we add a couple more theories here to this one—a development of the “Two-Document Theory called the “Four-Document Theory.” It was proposed by B. H. Streeter early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, basically in which he said there are, in fact, two more documents that were used as sources besides Mark and Q up here. Matthew had his own written source, which Streeter called “M,” and Luke had his own written source, which Streeter called “L.” So you’ve got four source documents, but each of Matthew and Luke, each of them use only three of them. So, not many people accept this particular model, but the terms “M” and “L,” for the material unique to Matthew and unique to Luke, has been preserved, and you’ll still see that show up in discussions of the Synoptic Problem.

So, in a lot of discussions of the Synoptic Problem, M, L, and Q are used just to represent material with the particular people debating it, not specifying whether these were ever written sources or ever even sources at all, but just a way of labeling certain material.

We’re going to talk about “form criticism” later in the course, but I might mention it here because “form criticism” sort of looks like a combination of Westcott and Alford’s oral tradition theory with the “two-document theory.” So, you’d have Matthew and Luke down here as the final documents, and above them Mark and Q; but then above that, a big cloud of oral tradition. This oral tradition then was used to put together the materials in Mark and Q, but they didn’t get all of it or use all of it. And Matthew and Luke also had access to the tradition as well as to these two sources. And that’s basically the model that won and, on the other hand, critics tend to accept the “two-document model,” but they also accept there was oral tradition floating around as well.

### Discussion of Various Theories

Well, [let's have] a little bit of discussion of these various theories. Take for instance the Original Gospel, Primitive Gospel, or Ur-Evangelion Theory; it has some advantages. It explains similarities in a natural way—that they [the Gospels] come from a common source. Lessing and Eichhorn proposed that this source was a written gospel in Aramaic, and then that this Aramaic gospel was not preserved because few people spoke it [the language] after Aramaic died out in the church (which is after 100 AD) so that it [the gospel] was not copied.

This tendency is seen in history: documents in a foreign language are generally not copied if the language is not known, and particularly if a translation is already available. Hebrew and Greek, for instance, were lost in the Western Church for centuries during the Middle Ages. Problems with the Ur-Evangelion theory: we have no direct or indirect evidence for such a document, as nobody speaks of such a document in antiquity and such; and we don't have any fragments of it. If it was an Aramaic-Matthew, as some have proposed, then the question would be: Why is it so different from the Greek-Matthew because you've still got to explain where the Luke stuff came from, and it supposedly came out of this? Why did the writers use this source in such a peculiar way? Sometimes they quote directly; sometimes [they] suddenly make tense and wording changes and even change the order occasionally.

Then there's the problem that Aramaic in some sense never really did die out of the church. It just gradually drifted into what we call Syriac, and there's a Syrian church, even today. So, this would work better, I suppose, if it were Hebrew, which did die out of the early church. But that's just suggesting various complications there.

How do we explain the material which is unique to each gospel, especially if it has apparent discrepancies if there's only one source? If the gospels are

condensations from it, why did Mark happen to extract only the same materials in Matthew and Luke yhsy complication arises. So, the Ur-Evangelium Theory explains similarities rather well, but doesn't really account for the differences too well.

Successive Dependence Theory has advantages: It claims we have all the original documents, so there's no need to hypothesize lost documents. or proto-gospels, or something of that sort. Problems: who borrowed from whom? Different scholars have been able to make some kind of case for each of the three orders, and part of the reason for this is that writers do condense; and, in fact, that was a very common phenomenon in antiquity of making condensed versions of longer works because papyrus was expensive. Parchment was more expensive, [and] scribes were skilled workers, so you had to pay a lot of money to have somebody copy something; so various condensations of various histories and things of that sort were often made in antiquity. Of course, people will sometimes expand on something, so something shorter might be a condensation, or something longer might have been an expansion. So we don't really know whether the authors expanded the source narratives or condensed them. How did the verbal differences arise? Why did the writers feel free to make changes in their sources if they knew they had only the inspired Gospels in front of them? Where does the material come from in later Gospels that's not in the earlier gospels, particularly when Peter is inconsistent in some ways?

Robert Gundry's commentary on Matthew takes a somewhat similar view: it argues that Matthew had Mark and Q and that Matthew modified the shepherd story, which was apparently then in Q, into the wise men story using a midrash style. That seems a big strain on inspiration. Well, those are the Successive Dependence Theories.

Fragmentary Theory, written fragments--advantages: Luke 1:1 tells us that there was much written material available. Many have attempted to draw accounts,

et cetera. Of course, these need not be fragmentary. They might have attempted to draw up as complete an account as they could. Schleiermacher did see that the Gospels looked like a series of anecdotes. There are only a few examples of connections between these anecdotes; for instance, Jesus doing several events one after another on the same day. In general, you don't have those kinds of connections. Apparently, there were a variety of sources. We see Luke shift from a Semitic style in Luke 1 and 2 to a Hellenistic style in the rest of his gospel. This implies that he had a different source for Luke 1 and 2, which we suggested was brought from Samaria.

Some downplay the reliability of the fragments to the point where we can't know their order or historicity. There is probably some merit in a fragmentary-tight view that there are multiple sources, but it needs some repair, I think.

Oral Tradition Theory—advantages: the events of Jesus' life were presented orally in the early ministry for the apostles and evangelical churches. The connotation of oral tradition is negative in applying many generations to transfer, but that connotation is not necessary in [the] corresponding Greek world where it just means something is handed over. A tradition might come directly from the apostles, if you like, rather than six generations later or something. The terms that are used for tradition in the New Testament are *paradidomi*-to hand over, and *paradosis*-materials handed over. They show up in the New Testament and can be translated "tradition," but they don't like the sense of a long cloudy history with no known source. The Greek sense refers to what a teacher hands over to a student to guard carefully and keep from error. Similarly in rabbinic schools, a good student was as one of them says, "Like a plastered cistern, which did not lose a drop of the material stored in it." Whether a rabbinic handing over are reliably to Moses, as the rabbis claim that by two-thousand years and thirty or forty transfers, is one thing, whether the New Testament tradition is reliable within one generation thirty generations or less is quite another question. Problems with

the oral tradition model: this possible view if we do not insist that the only New Testament sources were oral, short-hand did exist at that time and was used for recording court cases and such. Educated followers would have taken notes, written diaries, things of that sort. So it seems to me that a combination of written/oral sources is going to make the best sense.

### **The Problems of the Two or Four Document Theories**

We'll treat the two and four document models together. Their advantages are they're basically the same. Matthew and Luke do appear to depend on Mark in that they both follow Mark's order most of the time. When Matthew and Luke do not follow Mark, neither one follows the other. Thus we can see how Luke and Matthew might have had Mark in front of them, but not each other's gospel. So Matthew didn't have Luke or Luke didn't have Matthew. With this strength we can see why this particular view is dominate. However, it's not the only way to explain the data.

Griesbach had a reverse explanation idea, and he explains them by saying that Mark had both Matthew and Luke in front of him. Mark followed both Matthew and Luke where they agreed, but where they didn't agree he'd follow one or the other. So we'd get exactly the same result. Nearly any borrowing scheme can be argued both ways. Simple is not always earlier than complex. It's very difficult to tell which account was first in our literature as well.

Problems of the Two and Four Document Theories: we have no evidence for the background documents Q, or even worse, for the four document theory with M and L, too. Not even *comments* regarding their existence exist, unless we take Papias as referring to one of them say Q, but the early church took these as referring to Matthew; and although we can hypothesize that the early church didn't

know, they were just shooting in the dark, it's perfectly reasonable to assume that Papias was only one strand of the information that came from the apostles, and that other church fathers had access to the other strands, so they knew in fact that Papias was referring to Matthew. There are these verbal differences between the two, Matthew and Luke, that are peculiar if they are copying from Mark.

Why did they change some things, often trivial things, and then use other wording? Why did Luke omit a large section of Mark 6:45- 8:9? There is no easy rationalization for that. If we propose this section is missing *Ur-Markus*, then we admit another missing document. The Two and Four Document Theories are particular problems for Evangelicals, and that's this: why did Matthew the Apostle follow Mark as slavishly as he did if Mark is secondhand and Matthew was an eyewitness and was there himself? Why not use his own notes instead of Peter's Memoirs? The biggest problem, though, is that this view—two and four document—throws away all the traditional, that is, all the historical information regarding Gospel origins. All tradition says that Matthew was written before Mark, and this view reverses the order.

### **Proposed Solution**

Well, that's where we are on the Synoptic Problem. I'm going to give you a proposed solution. I wasn't there; I don't have time machines. I will find out one day; I believe Christianity is true, [and] I will find out one day how things worked. But here's what my proposed solution looks like: Every book has both internal and external evidence. It appears that the Gospels are written by the traditional authors: Matthew, Mark, and Luke, who used probably both oral and written sources. Internal evidence, on the other hand, suggests that Mark was followed in some way by Luke and Matthew. The apparent contradiction to this, the external evidence, says that Matthew was written earliest and that Matthew was probably written before Mark. Well, I suggest a model in which the oral source of Mark is

also a primary source of Matthew and Luke and that Matthew and Luke were written before Mark.

How do we work that? We look at the oral apostolic Testimony made. This [is] kind of an arrow coming down the middle, and Peter was one of the major spokespersons for the Apostles. The Apostles gathered and organized things, the material things, in the time they were together after Jesus' ministry, if you like. And then Matthew made use of the whole apostolic testimony and he wrote, as I think, a Hebrew Matthew; and, of course, he used his own memory, but he also used material that had been supplied by the apostles as they were discussing these together [earlier] and later. That's followed by a Greek Matthew that Matthew himself translated later, but we don't know.

Meanwhile the apostles are not only speaking in Aramaic—or whatever—to the other Jews in Jerusalem. They're beginning to branch out to Hellenistic Jews, and then going to move out of Israel and go to other places. So their oral testimony is also going to be developed in Greek. So it's possible that the Greek Matthew made use of the oral testimony of the Apostles in the form of Greek as well. Meanwhile, over on the other side of this big arrow, you have Luke, and Luke is in Israel for the two years that Paul was in prison at Caesarea and he goes to interviews. He interviews apostles; he interviews people who were part of the seventy; he interviews people who were across the Jordan and were in Perea and saw Jesus' miracles over there. He puts this material together, and some of that's the apostolic testimony of the Apostles and puts together his Gospel. Last of all, Mark in Rome has been with Peter while he's making/giving this material, and people ask him to write up what Peter had to say, so he does. So although he writes last, he's writing directly from one apostle rather than from selections as other people have.

Well, that's my model, if you like; it's in some ways more complicated than the others, but in fact it doesn't make any assumptions about detailed written

documents; though obviously some of the Apostles and other people may have had written notes in one way or another.

### **Similarities Explained**

So I ask three questions then that I need to respond to in presenting this model for teaching. And first is: How are the similarities to be explained? [There are other] questions then that I need to respond to in dealing with, in presenting this model for, critics; but first this: how are the similarities to be explained?

Well, first of all we suggest that Matthew, Mark, and Luke use mainly oral sources with some written supplements. So what are we going to have? Well, first of all, all the Synoptics depend on the life of Christ, an actual series of events in history. So part of the similarities between them comes from the fact that they aren't making it up: it is stuff that really happened. Some of the similarity is due to the fact these events actually happened, yet how do we explain the common selection of certain events from a much larger whole? [There are] maybe twenty healings scattered over the three Gospels where there must have been hundreds, maybe thousands, etc.

Well, secondly all depend on the oral preaching of the Apostles. The Apostles experienced all of Jesus' public ministry. They preached and talked together for a number of years afterward, and they were in communication to some extent thereafter. Doubtless as the Apostles were together; they talked through which instances in Jesus's ministry best captured who he was, what he did, and how best to present these items. As teachers, as we teach over and over again, we have to think through: Well, how well did that go? Did they understand? How could I have explained that better? and those sorts of reflections. So all the Synoptics depend on the life of Christ, the actual series of events; they all depend on the oral [tradition] and preaching of the Apostles where they got together and talked it out, identifying the materials which would work best.

And third, the apparent priority [of] Mark may be a result of Peter's influence as spokesman and leader among the Apostles during the early years while they were together in Jerusalem. So Mark preserves the teaching of the most influential Apostle, but is not the written source of Matthew and Luke. Peter's preaching, the oral source of Mark, is also the main oral source for Matthew and Luke because Peter's influence in the selecting and shaping of the material constitutes the apostolic testimony of Jesus. And presumably Peter too was influenced by decisions made among the Apostles, which were better and such, so that worked both ways.

And fourth, the similarity of Matthew and Luke where Mark is not present, what we call Q material, may be due to each having used Jesus' oral teaching materials. Those who study the Synoptic Problem are well aware that this material in Matthew is not always put in the same place as this material in Luke. Matthew arranges these sayings and discourses in blocks, while Luke scatters them throughout his narrative. Some suggest that Luke used Matthew, but Luke often has these discourses in a different context than Matthew.

Why would Luke have changed the context of Matthew? One of the strengths of hypothesizing a Q document is that it explains this feature by having no narrative context, and so Matthew and Luke just selected out sayings independently; but this still has the author's context and scheme. It's better, it seems to me, to say that Jesus is an itinerant speaker. He often repeats materials so that Luke and Matthew place items differently because Matthew reports one occasion and Luke another that's determined by Luke's interviews. Whether Matthew knew all the ones Luke knew, and Luke knew all the ones Matthew knew, we have no idea.

If I'm right that the Perean narrative material in Luke indicates that Luke interviewed people over in Caesarea, it may be that Matthew considered that

secondary, or wasn't even along at venues where these things happened and such. Sayings are typically reported once in the Gospel. The writings are after all trying to remove monotony. They are trying to keep the book length down since book productions were expensive. My suggestion here is that Matthew made decisions even where he knew several contexts. He made decisions putting them into a one particular context. Luke may have done the same as well.

Well, the idea so far then is actual events in history produced the similarities; the selection of which to present was partly done by the single group processing the apostles' [preaching], and that Jesus as an itinerant speaker, [so] his oral materials could have been found in a lot different contexts and in slightly different forms.

I'm an itinerant; well, was an itinerant preacher, if you like, when I taught at seminary. I would get invited to preach in various churches, and so I would go round [and preach], and I had certain sermons which I would use again and again. Other sermons I would use once or twice and decided I didn't do a great job on it. I would give up on the round and try again. I would polish it or something. Yet, surely, if you had tape recordings of these different sermons, they would not be exactly the same, but they would have some overlaps where I had settled on some way of giving an anecdote or something that was pretty close to being repeated.

I mentioned two more things under similarities. Five, the students of Jewish rabbis learned their master's teaching, and perhaps this was also done in Christian service. This, in fact, was a pretty common phenomenon. In educational circles throughout the world, memorization is kind of out of vogue in the West that had been common for many, many centuries. The great ceremonies and wording in particular in Jesus' teachings [are similar], I had mentioned that before; but the similarities in the Gospels are stronger when Jesus is speaking than when the narrators are narrating. So the great similarities there suggest some kind of memorization. It might be intentional memorization, or what we might call

accidental memorization. I tried hard several times to memorize Bible verses and never was great at it because of a bad memory, but having read through the Bible now seventy-five times, or something like that, in different versions, I know some verses. So that kind of thing happens. Newspaper reporters back in the time when the presidents used to go from town to town on train and giving their speech, it often was said that they could give the president's speech after five or six times reading it. So that does happen.

There are some clear parallels between Jesus and rabbis. Both had disciples. Both sometimes taught in parables. Both debated with opponents. Both were called "rabbi." Both in Greek and Jewish cultures learning was mainly by memorization from oral recitation rather than by reading books or taking notes and such. Birger Gerhardsson in his book *Memory and Manuscript* gives us a detailed discussion of this kind of material. Some students had great memories and could quote teachers like an Encyclopedia. Others could perhaps not remember that so well, but could quote the logic in the argumentation. [It depends on] different ways in which our brains have gotten wired over their growth, [and] I suppose there may have [been] some genetic component to it as well.

Lastly, under similarities, some documents or notes were likely used. Luke 1 - 4 mentions many root accounts, though we do not know whether he used any of these written materials. Papias' comments on Mark, [that Mark wrote] "accurately, but not in order," perhaps should be understood as Mark taking notes during Peter's sermons, which he later organized into a final draft. Something else is that Mark actually wrote the Gospel, "accurately, but not in order." So that is how similarities are to be explained.

### **Differences Explained**

How are the differences to be explained? Well, I recall that the Gospels sometimes contain exactly the same incidents clustered with some readings of differences in event, order, and words. Well, let's see. First of all, Jesus' teaching was doubtless somewhat, but not exactly, repetitive as he spoke to different audiences. This would help his disciples to learn his teachings and yet may account for some of the variations. Some of Jesus' actions were also repeated. Many miracles of people with the same kind of maladies are very similar type healings. The Gospels themselves typically do not repeat those kinds of things, so you do not generally get five narrations of lepers, or something of that sort. There are two cleansings of the temple if we take the Gospels seriously. There are two miraculous catches of fishes; there are two feeding of the multitudes, etc. So, some of Jesus' actions were repeated.

Thirdly, different witnesses see and emphasize different aspects of the same event. The easiest way to check this is to go to a reunion with your siblings, perhaps, and discuss things that happened, and you're slightly different ages, and so you remember some different items. But you remember some same items, yet you remember different things about the same items. Same thing will happen at a college reunion or a high school reunion or something of that sort. So basically different witnesses see and emphasize different aspects of the same event.

Fourthly, oral repetition, even by the same person, regularly produces the kind of verbal variation observed here [in the Gospels], striking similarity with random variation of tenses and things of that sort. Our minds, I guess some people's minds anyway, work verbally in such a way that you're eventually, essentially spinning out a tape of some sort, but others don't work that way, and you may have some stuff that you have exactly the same way on two occasions, and other things that you have put a different clause in, or you've done something like that, and you get a different result.

There is no need to postulate, by the way, a mini-linked chain in the case of rabbinic oral traditions allegedly going back to Moses. They have to because you've got 1500 years or so. Even with Matthew writing in the forty, in the forty's, you've still have about ten years of oral repetition between his writing it down, and that may be oral repetition by Matthew. The striking similarities are due to the Apostles' being together, [and] variations in tense and wording are natural features of personal differences, and even repetition of one individual. The writers and speakers are telling us what happened. They're not attempting to be identical in their accounts.

Fifth, the Gospel writers apparently do not always intend to convey the very words of Jesus, many of which were probably not spoken in Greek anyway. They tell us what Jesus said, but an exact transcript would be impractical because of length. All the Gospel writers were seeking to communicate widely, not just to a wealthy elite. So to contrast with Josephus' 20 volume *Antiquities*, they kept their cost down by selecting and summarizing events and discourses. Papyrus rolls were not that long, and they were fairly expensive, [so] the gospel message was compressed to the medium book style and economy of the day. Summaries, of course, can omit details and still be accurate.

Sixth, presumably the Gospel writers did not each know everything known by the other; they had their own recollections and their own research on some things that may have happened when a particular apostle was not around, or he may not have remembered. Lastly under differences, the evangelist certainly did not use everything they did know: remember John 21:25. But rather they selected, as John himself says a chapter earlier, John 20:30 and 31. They selected their materials to keep their accounts within balance and to give the emphasis that they intended. Shortening an account by generalizing and being vague makes the story drab. It is better to retain the dialogue in concrete detail, even if it means selection of only a few incidents or key sentences of a sermon to retain the vividness. There

was no use of sound lights as by modern TV news casters.

### **How does this fit with Inspiration?**

So, how do you explain the similarities? How do you explain the differences? Thirdly, how does this fit with inspiration? If the Bible really is God's inspired word sent for us, how does all of this fit with that? First of all, inspiration does not require dictation. It allows the author's style to come through without using or losing truthfulness. God has done even better than dictation—occasionally he wrote the commandments with his own finger, or whatever that involved, on the stone, if you'd like. God certainly dictated some things to some of the prophets, etc., but inspiration is that Scripture is fully trustworthy, as is taught many places. It also presumably has involved narrators who are selecting events, and the narrators of Samuel and Kings and Chronicles mention sources they use in putting them together, etc.

So inspiration does not rule out some dictation, but inspiration is consistent with approximate language such as round numbers. It's also consistent with summarization; it's consistent with non-chronological arrangement, say topical, as long as the author does not claim chronological order and then doesn't do it, if you'd like. It's not, of course, consistent with contradiction or explicit chronological error. A summary, of course, may seem misleading if you're trying to extract points from the story which the author has now provided. A hostile critic, commentator, reviewer can find contradictions in something where the person is not really contradicting himself. We see that all the time in election campaigns, so that's just a common feature. A writer may use a logical arrangement rather than chronological order, and he is not under obligation to tell you this explicitly.

Inspiration does ensure us that they're harmonious, but it doesn't tell us how to harmonize them. It tells us that these are harmonizeable, and that we should think in that direction, though that doesn't mean we need to move heaven

and earth to harmonize them; we might not know enough to do a proper job. Typically, we can often suggest two or three possibilities, or even a five or ten possibilities, but not be sure which one is right.

One example I can think of is harmonizing the three denials by Peter, etc. I know one writer who comes up with six denials to have all the material harmonized, and I don't think it's the way to go. That's not Hal Lindsey, it's Harold Lindsell in one of his books. I wasn't back there, so my own scheme is that on at least the second and third occasion Peter's got several people around him saying, "Yea what about this, etc." So one narrator picks out one of the persons and another one picks out another.

Lastly, inspiration is a revealed doctrine; we don't derive inspiration from Scripture by inductively resolving all the known difficulties, we deduce it from what the Bible teaches. The Holy Bible says God cannot lie, and that the writers were guided, and that Jesus, and the Apostles, and the prophets, etc. treat Scripture as inerrant. That's the sort of direction we go in deriving inerrancy from what the Bible teaches. Thus we don't need to be able to answer all questions before accepting it, though we should still work at answering such questions in order to help others, and in order to strengthen our own confidence in God and his words.

Liberals have an advantage here, if you want to call it that, in that they can pile up apparent inconsistencies and then claim a high probability that at least one of these is a genuine error. But the same technique can be used against the sinlessness of Christ or against the goodness of God; and if Christianity is true, then God is good and Christ is sinless, and his word is trustworthy. Remember that any single event is improbable as too many other things might have happened. We can argue that the Scriptures give positive evidence of their supernatural source, and that's what I would do. It is impressive enough that their historical accuracy is testable. We can argue then that we have no excuse that will stand in the judgment to objecting to the Scriptures.

Okay, well, that's where we are on the Synoptic problem, and I think we

will quit at that particular point. Thank you for your attention.

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## **Dr. Robert C. Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Lecture 10**

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### **Geography of Palestine and Jerusalem**

#### **Introduction**

We are working on our course in the Synoptic Gospels. We've looked so far at the historical Jesus, at the Jewish background, at an introduction exegesis, exegesis of the narrative genre, at the authorship and date, characteristics of the Gospels, at exegesis of parables, at the Gospels as literary works, and, most recently, at the synoptic problem. In this session, we want to take a look at the geography of Palestine, including the geography of Jerusalem. So, let's jump in and have a look at that.

In order to have a good overview of what's going on in the Bible, whether it'd be in the New Testament or the Old Testament, and in the Gospels in particular, it's desirable to have a handle on the relevant geography. For the synoptic Gospels, this is out of Israel at New Testament times. We'll look, first of all, at the physical features of Palestine, and, on a large scale, there has been little change in the basic geography since New Testament times. So as it stands now, [the geography] is basically how it was then.

#### **Regions**

We want to first kind of survey the major regions of the territory from east to west, and then we'll look at the more minor features going from North to South. The reason we look at the major regions from west to east is that the major geographical structures take a form of bands running north and south. So we will list these here starting at the west, or the Mediterranean coast, and moving eastward to the desert. The direction of prevailing winds is also from west to east, and since on the west we have the Mediterranean Sea, these winds carry moisture from the Mediterranean and then begin to deposit it as they come inland. As the

ground rises, it causes the air to rise, and the air then becomes saturated and drops its moisture. So this will help us understand the climate of each region as well.

### **Coastal Plain and Shephelah**

The first region running along the coast is the Coastal Plain and sometimes called the Plain of Sharon. That's not the whole of the Coastal Plain, but that's a good bit of it. This is a very low, rather flat plain, which is fertile where it's not too sandy or too salty. From a military perspective, this area was easy to travel along so long [as] we didn't get too close to the water where chariots or horses would tend to get slowed up by the sand. So this area was easy to invade from outside [the] country.

The large scale geography around Israel is Egypt to the south; and Egypt, for the period of the Old Testament, was a major political power. By the time we reach New Testament times, it had been under foreign domination for many centuries. Then the coast there [i.e., the Levant], because of the rainfall, was fertile, and that runs upward and then turns over into the Tigris-Euphrates valley and comes down this way [towards the Persian Gulf]. So we've got a shape that's, although not exactly, a crescent shape, which was called the "Fertile Crescent." Typically, the big military powers in the Old Testament period [that] had been out on the other part of the Fertile Crescent had been Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia. Then after Alexander's death, the Seleucid piece of Alexander's empire was also there as well. So invasion would often take place, and the invasion could come rather easily in on the Coastal Plain, either from Egypt to the south or Syria from the North.

Going in then a little farther from the west coast, we come to another north-south region, more or less, that is somewhat higher, somewhat more rolling terrain, though it's still low relative to what we're going to call the "central hill

country" here, which will be our next item. With these rolling hills [Shephelah] and wide valleys, most of the travel was along the valleys, and this area was still relatively easy to invade. It was also a fertile and got decent amount of moisture as well.

### **Hill Country**

The kind of central region of Israel/Palestine, etc. is what's called the "hill country." This is a region of rather sharp hills and v-shaped valleys. If you're from the United States, this is perhaps rather like West Virginia in the eastern U.S., although its climate would be more like, say, southern California; what we call a Mediterranean climate. Here, because the valleys are very sharp bottomed and because they've got rock in them, and usually intermittent streams of some sort in them, travel does not typically take place along the valleys but rather up along the ridges. So there is no particular thing interfering with travel in the Coastal Plain except, perhaps, where you crossed a stream coming down to the Mediterranean Sea. Therefore you might get some swampy lands.

The lowlands, I don't think I gave the name before—the "Shephelah"—was more rolling. You could travel on either kind of territory, but here on the hill country, you really needed to, at least for vehicle travel, or travel at all you need to travel up on the ridges and, even for foot travel that was the better way to go.

This is therefore more difficult to invade. The invaders had to go uphill to get into the area and did not find it easy to use chariots, which were the equivalent of tanks, I suppose, in ancient warfare. Farmers did not find this area nearly so nice for farming, and yet, because of the way the material was structured—it was basically a limestone—there was a tendency for it to form terraces; as you go up, the strata were basically horizontal. So at the edge of the hill you would have a little piece stick out. Basically, the farmers manipulated this by putting rocks along

the outside edge and letting soil build up; or, perhaps, even helping soil build up along these terraces. Not great terrain for growing grains, but they did grow grains in it; but [it's] pretty good for growing olives, grapes and things of that sort. On the west side of this hill country, where you had the moist air coming in from the Mediterranean and flowing up the hill, you had good moisture, good rainfall. So it was rather nice there.

### **Rain Shadow east of the Central Ridge**

Unfortunately, when you reach the ridge, the air coming up off the Mediterranean and having dumped [a] certain amount of its moisture typically as it goes up the ridge, you now come over the ridge, and the air begins to fall; and falling air warms up, and that means that the relative humidity goes down quite substantially. So it's not likely to rain; so typically you get what's called—on the east side of a ridge like that—you get what's called a "rain shadow." In the United States that phenomenon typically shows up in the Rockies where you get pretty good rainfall to the west, and also with prevailing winds from the west as we have as here in Israel. All that's from being in the temperate zones where the prevailing winds are out of the West. When you get over the edge of the Rockies and start to drop down, you get the same thing: a warming air, a drying air, and so typically rather poor rainfall east of the Rockies, which would be in the valleys up there, say around the Great Salt Lake[, which] would be a nice example of that whole area that's a very dry area. Well, that's the same situation you get here. So the rainfall is good in Israel west of the main ridge but poor to the east of the main ridge.

### **Rift Valley (North-South Region)**

Then coming down off the hill country, we reach a north-south region, which we call the "Rift Valley." You might have heard of that name in terms of missionaries in Africa, or something, because there's an important Rift Valley in

Kenya as well. It's actually part of the same rift system. The rift we're talking about here in Israel runs from up in Lebanon down through the middle of Lebanon; it then runs through the Sea of Galilee, runs down along parallel to the Jordan River (actually, the Jordan River runs in Rift Valley). It runs down past the Dead Sea, and then down to the Gulf of Aqaba, and the Red Sea there below it, and (that's not the Red Sea; that's the Gulf of Aqaba), and then runs on down, and runs into Africa. So it is a geologic rift due to two plates on the continental plate system that's been discovered and worked out in the last now 60 years, approximately since the 1950's. And in this particular case, actually, [it] is a rather deep fault.

And at the Dead Sea, the surface of the Dead Sea is actually over 1000 feet below sea level. The surface of the Sea of Galilee is about 600 feet below sea level, and this air that has been coming from the west has come over the rift, over the hill country, and comes down to that [level], so you get very little rain in here. But you do have this river that, rising from the north, which we'll talk about the mountains up there, will help water the area. The climate down here is typically very hot and very arid away from the river. So in modern times, it's been irrigated to have crops, and at least some sort of irrigation was going on in some places in ancient times as well.

### **Trans-Jordan**

Well, we keep moving east, and we have one more territory to think of. We have the Mediterranean, we have the Coastal Plain, we have the Shephelah, or low rolling hills; we have the Hill Country, we have the Rift Valley and then you come back out of the Rift Valley when you come up onto what we call the "Transjordan Plateau." It turns out the Transjordan Plateau is actually higher than the hill country so that the air coming back up again is cooled off and actually squeezed and dumps a little bit more [rain], almost all the rest of the moisture that it had in

it, which it hadn't dumped east of the ridge because the humidity of the air was too low. Now the humidity comes back up. It does dump the rest of it, but within a few miles, after you get up on the Transjordan Plateau, that's all gone [the moisture, that is] and you're out into what would be kind of the northern part of the Arabian Desert, or the Syrian Desert there as well. So, it is pretty well watered at the west edge, but very desert-y as you get a few miles in east of that.

So, that's a quick tour of the territories running north and south, and we're coming in from the west. So, there is the Mediterranean Coastal Plain, the rolling country or the Shephelah, the Hill Country, the Rift Valley and then the Transjordan Plateau.

### **Specific Geographic Features**

Now there are some smaller features that it's convenient here to look at going from Mount Hermon north to south. So, if we go up north of Israel, we come fairly quickly just to the east of the Rift Valley to the highest peak in the Palestine area, up over 9000 feet above sea level, and that's Mt. Hermon. It's the southernmost large peak in what's called the Anti-Lebanon Range. The Rift Valley, you see, runs up out of Israel into Lebanon, and you have mountains to the west side of the valley that are called the Lebanon Range, and mountains to the east side called the Anti-Lebanon Range. The top of Mt. Hermon is generally snow covered all year, and if you're up in Galilee in clear weather, you can usually see a little bit of that.

### **Territory of Galilee**

Coming south from that, we come to the area around the Sea of Galilee, which is called Galilee, the circle of territory, or something of that sort. This hilly region is a kind of, in some sense, an extension of the hill country down in Israel itself except there's a valley that separates there, so it has some of the features of

the hill country down in Judea such as is around Jerusalem. But this is the best-watered area in Palestine. Not only do we have the situation where the water coming in from the moist air coming in from the Mediterranean dumps its moisture on the hills as you come in eastward from the Mediterranean, but you also have a latitude effect going on here, that we're getting near the bottom end of the temperate zone, and so, as you go down south, you get into an area where there's rather low rainfall. But up in Galilee we have pretty substantial rainfall. This is about equal in rainfall to the eastern United States, so in the 40 to 50 inches per year rain. You can convert that to metric system if you'd like. It's higher in the north and lower in the south, so we've got upper Galilee and lower Galilee. The climate is reasonably cool in the mountainous part, but as you drop down to the Sea of Galilee, you're well below sea level, and it's pretty warm there.

### **The Jezreel Valley and Mount Tabor**

We mentioned also Mt. Tabor in this area; it's got an isolated peak and it's south of the Sea of Galilee. It's over 1900 feet above sea level. Contrast that with Mt. Hermon at 9000 feet above sea level, so one's a little under 2000 and the other's around 9000. It's just north of this next territory we'll mention, which is the Jezreel Valley.

As we're thinking about coming from the North, Mt. Hermon here, the Upper and Lower Galilee here, and then we have something coming across here this way: it is the Jezreel Valley, and also called sometimes the Plain of Esdraelon. That's more or less an east to west valley. It actually runs from northeast to southwest, but more east to west than north-south. It connects the coast with the Jordan Valley. It separates Samaria to the south from Galilee in the north. It actually forms the easiest transportation corridor to get from the Mediterranean Sea to the Rift Valley. Above it, you have to go across to Galilee with all their hills, and below it you have to go across the hill country. But if you go right

through this Jezreel Valley, the terrain is actually fairly low. So as a result, an important trade route crossed from the coast over into the interior at this particular point.

The south edge of the Jezreel Valley is marked by Mt. Carmel, and then a range continuing east from that. It's a long ridge, again approximately east-west, as the Jezreel Valley is. It is the south side of the Jezreel Valley with a maximum height of about 1800 feet. So again, much, much lower than Mt. Hermon, but actually getting up around the same height as Mt. Tabor is. This range forms a barrier to north-south travel. A person traveling northward from, say, Egypt, comes up the Coastal Plain; but when you get near this Mt. Carmel, you've either got to go all the way over to the coast and kind of work your way around the end of Mt. Carmel, which actually sticks out into the Mediterranean there, or you have to come back in a ways and go through one of two or three of the passes.

Control of the passes was important in ancient times militarily; remember that at the time of the New Testament we're thinking about here, Israel's not an independent state. Rome, in fact, controls everything on the east end of the Mediterranean until you get into the Parthian Empire. So, they're not so worried about it then. But in Old Testament times, control of passes was important militarily. The city of Megiddo is on one of these passes. Revelation's "Armageddon" is actually a modification of [the Hebrew] "Har Megiddo," "hill of Megiddo," and controls one such pass. The plains north of Megiddo were, in fact, a site of many major battles over the course of military history.

### **Wilderness of Judea**

Jumping south now across the areas where Samaria and Jerusalem and that sort of thing would be, we come to the Wilderness of Judea. This is a badlands

area. It's actually in the—what should we say—western side of the Jordan River, and so in the Rift Valley, more or less. It's actually in a rain shadow of the ridge of the hill country. I use the term badlands because it reminds me a great deal of the Badlands of South Dakota. It is hilly, but there's virtually no vegetation on it, not at least at the tree level. There are a little bit of shrubbery and some grass during the rainy system.

Well, this is an area where the combination of low rainfall here in the rain shadow of this ridge is running down from the hill country. The combination of the rain shadow and a poor, rather chalky soil produces an area that is bad enough in regard to vegetation that it is virtually uninhabited. So today, and probably through most of its history, it has been an area where nomads come in seasonally and graze their sheep while there is grass growing and get out of the area when nothing is going on. So it's territory used for grazing sheep and for grazing goats in the wetter winter season.

### **Negev**

One more area we'll mention here, and that is south of the hill country. Hill country eventually comes kind of to an end somewhat south of Jerusalem. We have an area called the Negev. The King James Version typically translates that: "the south." I don't recall now how some of the other modern versions translate that. It's an arid land south of actually the city of Hebron, which from Jerusalem down you would go down maybe 30-40 miles to get down to Hebron: Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and then Hebron. The territory [Negev] is flat to rolling. The soil is actually pretty good but now, due to the latitude effect getting out of the bottom the North Temperate Zone, if you like, you are getting very little rainfall. You might for a moment stop and look at the zones, if you like, of our globe. You have the equatorial zone, and then you've got the tropical zones on either side of that;

and then you've got the temperate zones on either side of that; and then you get up into a more subarctic type further [in the] northern area. The transition between the temperate zone and the areas down closer to the equator has a rather low rainfall. So the Negev is an area rolling or flat, pretty good soil, and very little rainfall.

Even in ancient times, and still now in modern times as well, certain inhabitants had figured out a way to actually grow crops there by concentrating water by certain types of tricks. A number places you would have a valley that would catch rainfall, and the rainfall would then tend to run off rather quickly and deposit, therefore, soil down in the bottom of the valley. The water would run off to the low side of the valley and out of the valley. They'd basically put a dam in the bottom of the valley, and it would catch water for a little while and would pick up all the silt that had run off. So you could then grow crops in that silt area. Where you might only be getting 2, 3, 4 inches of rain a year, you were getting your little farming plot down on the bottom concentrating rainfall from a much, much bigger area.

Well, that's kind of a quick tour then of the major regions of Israel from the north-south, ones running from the coast inward, from west-east, and then some of the peculiar individual features running from south to north.

### **Bodies of Water**

I'll say a word or two about the major bodies of water around Palestine. You have the Mediterranean Sea on the west. The Israelites of Old Testament period were not really seafarers, but they did work as middlemen to a certain extent for people who were seafarers and who were bringing trade in from the Mediterranean, or taking spices and other things out from Arabian areas or such. So occasionally they had engaged in trade in that particular way. The Mediterranean Sea, is a large body of salt water, actually connected to the

Atlantic, 1500 miles further west of Gibraltar. Palestine has few natural ports compared, for instance, with Greece or Phoenicia. Phoenicia was on the east coast of the Mediterranean further north, so the Jews were involved in trade only as middle men.

Then the bodies of water in Israel: you had the Sea of Galilee, or the Lake of Tiberius, or Kinnereth are various names given to it. It is a little lake that was perhaps 7 by 14 miles, something like that. It is a freshwater lake. The surface is 600 feet below sea level, so lower even than Death Valley in United States. It is fed by the Jordan River, which basically its waters came out from the Mount Hermon area, and then they still consider it the Jordan River when it runs out the other side of the Sea of Galilee and continues on down in the Rift Valley. The Sea of Galilee was important for fishing both back then and even now, but its peculiar topography and climate was such as to produce some fierce storms. You're talking about a lake that's a few miles across, so it's big enough that you can get some substantial waves on it, although it's not like the Mediterranean or anything. It's got a hot desert east of it; it's got Mount Hermon at 9000 feet northeast of it; it's got this Rift Valley that runs north and south of it; it's got higher terrain to the west of it, and it's got the Mediterranean Sea west of that. So you've got weather systems coming in from the Mediterranean. You've got an area up here where cold air can be produced around the mountain; you've got the hot air over here, and frequently the combination of those produced some very fierce storms that arose in a very short period of time.

So, the Mediterranean Sea, the Sea of Galilee, then you got the Jordan River. The river began on the lower slopes of Mount Hermon, descends about 2300 feet in about 100 miles, not counting all the meanders of the river, but just as a the crow flies, if you like, southward from Hermon, and it flows through the sea of Galilee and then on down to the Dead Sea.

The Dead Sea is also called by the Romans Lake Asphaltitus. Its surface is the lowest point on earth; 1296 feet below sea level [and] probably lower than that now because they've been using up a lot of the water for irrigation, and that has lowered the Sea of Galilee. But that was typically the kind of depth, kind of elevation in antiquity and up until the big irrigation projects started in the last 30 years. The water is extremely salty; fish can't live in it; people find it irritates their skin. But if you go swimming in it, which number of people do, you float in it like a cork, and that is a rather unusual phenomenon. Its waters and the salt deposits were mined back in antiquity and today for various sorts of minerals, particularly salts of one sort or another.

So this is a quick tour then of the major bodies of water around Palestine. All of these things we've talked about, the north-south regions and these little individual, peculiar regions and the major bodies of water, they're all the same as they were in antiquity. I've left out perhaps one item. A very small lake north of the Sea of Galilee, Lake Merom, which I think still existed in some of the maps I remember seeing from late 40s; but when I went in the after Israel/Jews began to resettle the land because it was good land that could be used agriculturally, and so is now farmland rather than water.

### **The Politics of Palestine**

Political features of Palestine, however, have changed drastically since New Testament times; and we're not going to deal with the changes that have taken place, nor what's there today; but basically we will look at the political features back at New Testament times. This will be helpful in understanding of the Gospels. So we're going to start with political divisions at the time in the ministry of Christ.

We start first of all with Judea, and that's the territory that runs, well, at various times it has run all the way from the Mediterranean, but by this time it's back in a little bit from the coast and runs up and over the central hill country, around north and south of Jerusalem basically. That was the old territory of the tribe of Judah. At this particular time [New Testament], it had been expanded to include Samaria on the north, which still was known by that name, and Idumea on the south, which was also known by that name. But it was the administration unit often called "Judea," which is obviously a modification of Judah. It was part of the territory that was ruled by Herod the Great during his reign, and I've here got that in my notes as 37-4 B.C. There's some argument about the end point on that, but we will not do anything with it here. This was also then ruled when Augustus verified and modified Herod's will by Herod's son Archelaus from (let's say) 4 B.C. to about A.D. 6, and then ruled by the Roman procurators from AD 6 to 41, and then by Herod's grandson, Herod Agrippa I, from 41 to 44, and then back by the Roman procurators again from 44 to 66. The population of this Judea proper was mostly Jews, but Samaria was mostly Gentiles, including some Samaritans, but lots of others; and the Idumea mostly descendants of the Edomites who, however, had converted to Judaism during the Maccabean Period, and I don't know to what extent or how serious they were about that.

North of Judea was Galilee, but this was the area west of the Sea of Galilee. This had once been the domain of some of the northern tribes of Israel, and then after the Assyrians carried off the Northern Kingdom, it was for a long time the home of Gentiles until the Maccabees became dominate from 163 to 160 BC, and they repopulated it with Jews. It may well be that Mary and Joseph wound up in Nazareth as a result of their ancestors having moved back up into that area. We don't know really much about that. After the Death of Herod the Great, when his territory was split up under his will, this was ruled by Herod Antipas, and he shows up in the Gospel accounts from (we think) about 4 B.C. to A.D. 39. And

then it's ruled by the Roman procurators from 39 to 41 (not very long), and then by Herod Agrippa, 41 to 44, and then by the Roman procurators again. Some considered Galilee a hotbed of revolutionaries, and it certainly had some up there. Herod had some trouble with that, and the Romans, certainly later in the first century leading up to the Jewish revolt, had troubles with revolutionaries in that area.

### **Perea in Trans-Jordan**

A narrow strip east of the Jordan River was called Perea, presumably from the Greek *peria* – “across,” and was inhabited mainly by Jews by New Testament times, and I think basically the situation was rather like that of Galilee. It had been largely Gentile from the Babylonian captivity down to the Maccabees, and it had been repopulated. It had the same rulers as Galilee. So when Herod the Great was in control of things, this was part of his territory, and then when his territory was split up, this went to Herod Antipas. After Antipas and Herod Agrippa I were not ruling it, then the Roman procurators were ruling it.

There is another territory that had some Herodian rule, and that's typically called today the Tetrarchy of Philip, or Trachonitis is another name that's given. It was a multi-ethnic region northeast of the Sea of Galilee and had mostly Gentile inhabitants. After the death of Herod the Great, because he had been ruling over that, it was ruled by another one of his sons, Philip, from (let's say again) 4 B.C. to 34 A.D., and then by Roman procurators and Herod Agrippa as we've mentioned already before. So some of Jesus' ministry takes place in that territory as well, probably the feeding of the 4,000 and some miracles as well.

A fifth region we should mention is a region called the Decapolis, Latin-Greek for "ten cities," but it wasn't just 10 cities. The whole administrative operation of those areas, and probably very commonly in the ancient Near East,

was a city-dominated territory around it. The Decapolis cities were a league of usually ten Hellenistic cities (the number of cities actually went up and down some) and their city territories. We now have some evidence that the territory of several of these cities included a piece of coast of the Sea Galilee, so presumably they shared fishing rights and had their own piers and, perhaps, their own fishing fleets on the Sea of Galilee. The Decapolis would be mostly Gentile inhabitants, though again it's most likely, since it was a Hellenistic city, there were also probably some Jewish people there as well. After the Romans came, so after the Maccabean period ended, this was made independent of Jewish control. So it was never under the control of Herod the Great or of his descendants. So that was a quick tour then of the territories, political territories, if you would like, around the time of Jesus.

### **Outbreak of Revolt**

We might mention a few of the cities of Palestine during the first century A.D. There was, of course, Jerusalem. Jerusalem is located right up on the ridge of the hill country, so that not going too far west you could look down and see off in the distance where the Mediterranean would be; it would be very obvious. Going over east of Jerusalem, you could actually see the Dead Sea, and you could certainly see the wilderness to the east. It was what we might think of as the Jewish religious capital of Judea and Palestine. Herod certainly would have his palace there, but not his only palace there. He perhaps was not excited about being in that area in the winter. You're up getting towards 3000 feet, so he had one other winter palace in Jericho, which has much nicer weather, and even Masada (we'll say something about Herod's fortifications here in a bit).

The Romans did not consider this their capital of Judea while they were in control of the east. Herod himself had built a port city to the northwest of

Jerusalem on the Mediterranean coast, and because Palestine did not have any natural harbors (well you have a little sort of something where Mt. Carmel sticks out, but even that's not very satisfactory), Herod had spent a great deal of money to build an artificial harbor by putting huge stones in the water. He'd use cement (cement, we think, well, as far back as we know, is a Roman invention that they might conceivably have gotten it from someone else.) They had even figured out how to make cement that would dry underwater, which we have varieties of that that will do that as well. So they had made sort of large jetties that would run out and made an area of calm water that you could bring ships into, and they could ride out the storms in there and not be mashed. So that became an important port during Herod the Great's control. And then after his death, the Romans took this as a capital.

When their procurators, prefects or whatever, were ruling over Judea, they operated this as the capital. It was a city in which there were both Jews and Gentiles and, in fact, the outbreak of a Jewish revolt against Rome spins out of a riot there. Probably the right term to say is a confrontation between the Jews and Gentiles at Caesarea. So Herod had a palace there. The Roman procurators had a palace there. An inscription mentioning Pontius Pilate was found there, which was probably part of the theatre at Caesarea as well.

A rather important city in Old Testament times was the city of Samaria that became the capital of the Northern Kingdom. That had its ups and downs, but Herod the Great rebuilt that during his reign, and he named it Sebaste, which is Greek for "Augustus" essentially. So Caesarea was named for Caesar, which becomes the whole family name eventually, but only [for] Julius and Augustus at the time when Herod was around. Sebaste then [is] named even more explicitly for Augustus. Why he chose Greek for it instead of Latin Augustus, I don't know. It was rebuilt for Herod's army veterans. The inhabitants of that were mostly Gentiles.

A third city in Palestine is Tiberias named for another emperor. So you have Julius, who made a shot for emperor and got killed, and Augustus who succeeded, and then his adopted son—a nephew or something—named Tiberius. This city was built by Herod Antipas when he was made heir of the territory of Galilee and Perea. So he built it on the shore of the [Sea of] Galilee and named it in honor of Tiberius. The spelling is for the emperor “ius” at the end and for the city “ias”—Tiberias. That is actually pretty near where Jesus ministry takes place and yet, as far as I know, there are no explicit references to him being in the city at any time.

Besides Antipas, you remember one of the other heirs was Philip. Philip got the area northeast of the Sea of Galilee. So he built a city, and he called it Caesarea again, but for purposes of not confusing it with the other Caesareas, some people in antiquity called it "Caesarea Philippi" or Philip's Caesarea, and that has stuck for use in modern times. So to distinguish the two "Caesareas," if it is nothing said, it is the earlier Caesarea that Herod built, or what is sometimes called Caesarea Maritima, Caesarea on the sea. The other one was Caesarea Philippi. It was built as a capital for Herod Philip's tetrarchy. So it was up in that territory and up pretty close to head waters of the Jordan River there.

There are a number of Decapolis cities; more than ten at some times and less than ten at other times. I just gave my students five of them here which show up now and then either in the New Testament or in Josephus' writing: Scythopolis, the city of the Scythians, so something about its history back several centuries; Hippos, named for “horse,” I'm not sure what the reason for that is; Gadara, one of the alternative names that comes up in Gadarene Demoniac texts—that is one of the passages we'll look at here later, so we will say something about that then; and Gerasa, one of the other names that shows up for that; and then Philadelphia, named for Ptolemy Philadelphus probably—so “city of brotherly love,” as those of you who live in the east, or live in the Philadelphia area, know it from Pennsylvania here. So those would be some of the Decapolis cities.

Galilean towns: probably “city” would be pushing it a little bit. These are not fortified cities. Nazareth, where Jesus comes from, is not named explicitly in the Old Testament, though there are these *netzar* passages that we mentioned in relation to Messianic prophecy. Cana, Magdala, Capernaum, Korazin, Bethsaida. Magdala, Capernaum, Korazin, and Bethsaida: all basically on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and Cana and Nazareth [are] back up in sort of the hill country of Galilee.

Some Judean towns besides Jerusalem are: Jericho is certainly important in Old Testament times and still important at New Testament times. There was an old and new Jericho; probably that is part of the explanation for how Jesus heals this particular blind man coming to one of the Jerichos. So he was coming to Jericho in Luke, and leaving Jericho in Matthew and Mark. The new Jericho was a snazzy place and well-to-do people lived there, and that’s probably where the tax collector Zachaeus lived. The other one was the traditional city and probably what Matthew, at least, would have thought of in terms of as a Judean city.

Bethany was across the Mount of Olives from Jerusalem. Bethlehem, south of Jerusalem, actually had a little bit [of the town] out into the wilderness. Then Emmaus where there is some uncertainty on where the two [disciples] are going to Emmaus. There are a couple different locations, but general agreement [is] it is northwest of Bethlehem

So cities of Palestine during the first century AD: Jerusalem, which was the religious capital; Caesarea, the Roman capital; Sebaste, the Old Testament Samaria rebuilt for Herod’s veterans; Tiberias, the capital of Galilee; and Caesarea Phillip

### 3 Major Roads

A word or two about major roads: to the best of my knowledge, we do not have names for these roads that come from New Testament times. So the names

I'm going to use here for the three roads we're going to discuss are traditional names that are used in biblical studies, and some of these certainly come from the early history of the region.

The first of these the name actually comes from Isaiah: "Via Maris," the "Way of the Sea," which is a nice, descriptive term. It was the coastal highway that came up from Egypt—not quite at the coast—but paralleled the coast a few miles inland. Then just south of the Carmel ridge it split, and one piece went up to the west and stayed on the coast and went on up then to Tyre, Sidon and Antioch--eventually up in that direction. The other one turned east, went through, I think, the Megiddo Pass, and comes down to the Sea of Galilee, goes by Tiberias, and then goes on up and heads out to Damascus. So it was a major north-south coastal road. It certainly carried a good bit of trade traffic that did not go, say, by sea. Certainly a lot of trade traffic would have run up the coast and come into a port.

The second road I want to say a word or two about kind of parallels this, but it is back across the Rift Valley and up on the Trans-Jordan Plateau. It had the name "the Kings Highway," but runs on the Trans-Jordan Plateau, and runs from the Gulf of Aqaba at the top of what, I guess, we can call the Red Sea. So goods shipped in from the south came up to the port there and then went up overland up the Kings Highway that went by some of the Decapolis cities, and then angled over to Damascus as well. Both of those, Via Maris and the Kings Highway, joined at Damascus and connected into the area of the Mesopotamia Valley, to the cities over there, Palmyra and such, over to the east.

A third road, rather more used by the Jews in connection with their travel from Galilee to Jerusalem,, is the road that stayed along the ridge of the hill country and so has the name that we use the "Ridge Route." It was less important for international traffic because it was not as easy to travel along. It went up and down and perhaps was not as well paved, we might say.

But it was rather important, as I say, for pilgrims going from Jerusalem to Galilee with one serious drawback: it went through Samaria. So people going from Jerusalem back home to Galilee, or vice versa, coming down for festivals, might use it; but if they were edgy about the Samaritans, or not in too much hurry, they might instead go down into the Rift Valley and use a road there and then come back up again. We see both of those kinds of routes used in connection with people going to and from Jerusalem.

So this is a quick tour of the three major roads. There were obviously a lot more roads. There were obviously roads that connected from the Via Maris over to Jerusalem and from Jerusalem over and down across the Jordan over to the Kings Highway and there would be something similar to that couple of other places along the way.

### **Herodian Fortifications**

Lastly, under our discussion of the geography of Palestine, are the Herodian fortifications. One of the reasons Herod is called Herod the Great is not because of his great personality, but because of his great building activities. The major structures around the Temple at Jerusalem are his. The major structures in Sebaste and in Caesarea are his. The major structure at Hebron is his--the patriarchal burial there of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob etc. are all Herod's.

He also built some fortifications. He was well aware that: 1) that he was not super popular with the Jews, but 2) the Roman Empire ended not too many miles to the east of him and that there was a pretty strong nation, the Parthians, to the east there. Right at the beginning of his career, well, not quite the beginning, right before he became the king of the Jews, the Parthians had invaded, captured, and imprisoned his older brother Phasaël. Phasaël committed suicide to avoid, I suppose, being tortured or something like that sort. Herod had gotten away. So Herod already had that in mind. Then somewhat later in his career after he was

King of the Jews, but did not feel terribly safe yet, there was still Cleopatra and Anthony to worry about; and then, even after all that was over, there were still possible rebellions to worry about. So he built himself a number of fortifications.

He built himself a fortification at Machaerus east of the Dead Sea. This is a location where, according to Josephus, John the Baptist was put to death. John the Baptist was beheaded presumably there. The New Testament does not tell us where that took place, but it was in the territory of Herod Antipas who was the Herod who put John to death. You remember Herod the Great was gone by then. He was the one who had put the babies to death trying to get Jesus. But Herod Antipas had put John the Baptist to death.

Then there was Masada on the west side of the Dead Sea. I guess both Machaerus and Masada were not only fortifications but palaces for Herod. He wanted somewhere where he could retreat to and did not have to give up—at least all of his royal prerogatives—while he was laying low until whatever revolt blew over to the west of the Dead Sea. That [Masada] has been pretty well excavated and has two palaces on it. One is kind of up on top of what we call a mesa, I guess, in southwestern American English. It's a plateau with rather steep sides. The Dead Sea is off to one side and various wadis coming down to the Dead Sea on the west side. So he built a western palace on top. Then on the north end, kind of working its way down the cliff so he got some shade there, was his north palace, and some elaborate stuff surviving there has been found in recent excavations.

So this was his palace; and then after he died, it fell into hands of the zealots during the Jewish revolt, and this was the place where they made their last stand against the Romans. The Romans conquered Jerusalem in AD 70 but it wasn't until AD 73 that they felt they were ready to go and surround Masada and smoke them out, so to speak. In fact, the zealots at Masada committed suicide rather than give up there.

A third fortification of Herod is one called "Herodian." So Herod modestly

named it for himself. Here he took a hill southeast of Bethlehem and built up the top of it, so it looks like a volcano today, and put a palace in there. That was his retreat palace, and then down at the base of the hill he had a palace that he could use for, what shall we say, less dangerous situations. For many, many years since Josephus, it's been understood that Herod's tomb was there, and I believe that the evidence for that has been recently discovered, but I haven't heard how that all settled out. So no body of Herod has been found there, but some structures that might well be Herod's tomb have been recently found.

### **Jerusalem**

Well, that's our tour of the geography of Israel, Palestine if you like. We want to say a few words about the geography of Jerusalem, so some more detail on that. Here we are going to divide our stuff up first of all into what we might call the natural features: the valleys and hills around Jerusalem, and then look at the city walls, which we can still find some fairly good traces for some of them anyway. Then the various sections of the city and a few of the particular major buildings, structures and things that were there at Jesus' time.

### **Valleys of Jerusalem**

Jerusalem is up basically on the ridge of the hill country. It is surrounded by some valleys. Jerusalem was pretty easy to fortify in three directions and not so easy on the north side. We have a valley running down the west side of Jerusalem and then across the bottom [south] that is called the Hinnom Valley. This is a pretty deep valley. It became at one point a place where garbage was burned. So the Hebrew *ge-hinnom* became a picture in Jewish thought of hell. "Gehenna" is the term you will see in the New Testament now and again, unless your translation translates it away in some way; it is this particular term.

To the east of Jerusalem there was a fairly deep valley called the Kidron Valley. It's between the Temple and the Mount of Olives. When Jesus does his

triumphal entry into Jerusalem, he comes down the Mount of Olives and then back up to come in, probably, the east gate of the Temple complex. So the Kidron Valley would be the location of Gethsemane, though there are a couple of suggestions for just where the Garden of Gethsemane was.

There is a third valley, which is not nearly as noticeable today. with aerial photos taken near sunset, you get some hints of it. It was the valley in Josephus called Tyropoean, [or the] Cheesemakers Valley. I'm not sure exactly what the Hebrew of it might have been. I don't know that we have a document that tells us that. It was between the Temple Mount on the east side of the city and the territory south of that where David had originally conquered Jerusalem and such, and the western part of Jerusalem where the upper city was and such. This valley is now pretty largely filled in, but there are some traces of it. So those are the valleys around Jerusalem.

Jerusalem was also surrounded by hills. It's in the hill country, and it's a hill country with lots of valleys and such. So here are a few of the important hills around Jerusalem: David, you remember, conquered the city from the Jebusites. The Jebusite city had been a rather small city on a hill that is south of where the Temple is now. That was called the city of the Jebusites and also called Ophel, and again I don't know for sure about the history of that name; so it is the area south of the Temple, but still up on this hill between the Kidron Valley on the east and the Tyropoean Valley on the west is the Ophel.

The hill on which the Temple came to be built is Moriah. It is the site of the Temple and apparently the site of Abraham's almost-sacrifice of Isaac. There is not quite as much certainty there, but [there are] some hints in that direction from the biblical material.

There is the term "Zion" that also occurs in connection with Jerusalem. That was probably originally either Ophel, or Moriah, and comes to be a generic term for the whole city. But then in Mediaeval times that comes to be applied to

the western hill or the upper city, if you like. So if you talk about going to Mount Zion now, if [you] tell a taxi driver you want to go to Mount Zion, he will put you over there rather than at the Ophel or the Temple site.

A third hill is the Mount of Olives. It is outside the city, perhaps to the ridge, about one half mile east of the city. It was at the edge of the wilderness, so up on top of the Mount of Olives you can see the wilderness to the east of you and much more vegetated area to the west of you. It was on the way from Jericho to Jerusalem, so the road would come over the Mount of Olives there. It is the site of Jesus' ascension.

The hill of the upper city is west of the Ophel across the Cheesemakers' Valley and higher than Ophel or Moriah. So if you stand on the Mount of Olives and take a picture looking west across the city, you can see this territory standing higher there. That is to say, it was called Zion in the Middle Ages, but probably misidentified. So that's the hills and valleys around Jerusalem.

### **Walls of Jerusalem**

The next thing we might mention are the city walls at New Testament times. Some of these walls still stand or have walls built on the same general line, same foundations, as they did. The walls roughly follow the valleys so as to make it, when a person attacks the city, they have to go down into the valley and up to the wall to get into the place. So the south wall is generally taken to run around where the Kidron and the Hinnom Valley run together, and so it kind of encloses the Tyropoean Valley in the city. So that's the south wall around this way with the Hinnom Valley over here and the Kidron coming down here.

The east wall: you get the Kidron Valley over here on the east side of the city. The Kidron Valley here and the east wall is up the slopes of the Kidron Valley and along the east side of the Temple.

The west wall on the Hinnom Valley, but on the east side of it that, is on

the city side of the Hinnom Valley, and so those walls go back, I think, probably as far back as the bigger city has existed, so probably from shortly after Solomon's time; although doubtless they have been rebuilt on several occasions.

The north side of the city, though, did not have any good valley protecting it. So over history they have built several walls going out further as the city has expanded. The first north wall just basically ran east from the Joppa Gate right over to the Temple. The second north wall ran out from there and went north and came back to the Temple. So it enclosed a little bit bigger area on the north side of the city.

Then the third north wall was not there in Jesus' time. so the territory it enclosed was a suburb; you would use the term [suburb] there, but it didn't have the same flavor as it does today. It began after Jesus' ministry. [It was] begun by Herod Agrippa [II], and then when the Roman emperor said cut that out, he stopped, and it was finished during the revolt 66-70 AD. It ran north from the east side of the Temple up the Kidron Valley for a ways and then swung around and came back down to Joppa Gate. So there were three north walls.

These sets of walls then divided the city into sections. Down here south of the Temple is the old City of David, the territory he conquered, the old Jebusite city. It is basically on the Ophel hill. Then there is the Temple Mount north of that. That was built by Solomon, and it's on Mount Moriah. Then there is the Lower City, and there is disagreement by map makers on just where to put that, but I go along with what appears to be the majority of them: that is, the Tyropoeon Valley. So west of [the] Ophel, before you get up onto the upper western part of the city--the Upper City; so the Lower City. The Upper City: this hill that runs—here's the Tyropoeon Valley—it is over here to the west of it, and then the Hinnom Valley is over here. So it is up in that particular region--the Upper City.

There are a couple other pieces to the city. There is the territory called the Second Quarter, which is between the first and second city walls. Then, finally, what was called the New City of Bethsaida, which was between the second and

third walls. So these would both be extensions to the north of the city.

### **Buildings and Structures in Jerusalem**

Some major buildings and structures from the New Testament period: We first of all have the Temple complex. The Temple we generally think of as the building, but there was also a large platform it was built on. When Herod the Great, at least thought in terms of refurbishing the Temple about 20 BC, he realized that because the land fell off like it did around that hill of Moriah, it would be necessary [in order] to build what he wanted, he needed to extend that. So he took what was perhaps initially 500 cubits square—probably left over from Solomon’s Temple, but at least standing in the Second Temple times—and extended that some significant distance to the south; and then we get a kind of longer rectangle. At the outer edge of this platform, if you like—or terrace, if you like—you’ve actually got a pretty long drop off to the bottom of the Tyropoean Valley on the one side and the Kidron Valley on the other side.

On top of this platform then the Temple stood; not in the exact middle, but roughly [the] middle. There was an open porch-way with a roof on it around three sides; [well,] two sides anyway. The south side was called the Royal Portico, and the east side Solomon’s Portico. Solomon’s Portico probably indicates that Solomon had something there in the original Temple, though the material we have now is later than that. The Royal Portico was probably built by Herod, but the name suggests that the followers did not want to advertise Herod, or something of that sort. In any case, that is the Temple building.

So a platform with the courts; i.e., the outer court of the Gentiles and then the main court being the Court of the Women, and then inside that you come up a stairway, [and] there is a very narrow Court of the Men where they could stand and put their hands on the animals as they were being sacrificed; and then the bigger court of the priests, and then back of that the Temple complex itself. The

platform was probably about 750 feet east-west; that is about 500 cubits, and about twice that north-south. So Herod had substantially increased the Temple platform from what we get as the traditional size that shows up in rabbinic literature.

Just north and west of the Temple, and adjoining it, is the Fortress Antonia. That, at least, [was] rebuilt by Herod, and by New Testament times that was being used as the place where the Roman garrison kept an eye on things because Temple festivals sometimes developed into riots of one sort or another due to dissatisfaction of some of the worshippers with the Romans and things of that sort. The Romans wanted to be right there to be able to do anything. Traditionally, the Fortress Antonia is the site of Jesus' Roman trial, though a number of people now think perhaps it was over at Herod's Palace, which we will say a word about here in a moment.

The west gate out of the city of Jerusalem, and where a road then ran off to Joppa, was called the Jaffa Gate. There were three big towers for defensive purposes built there at that gate. One was named for Herod's brother, Phasaël, who had died in the Parthian invasion; one was named for Herod's, what shall we say, favorite wife, Mariamne, who, in spite of which, he put to death; and one named for a friend of his, Hippicus--so three Jaffa Gate towers. One of those towers, the lower parts are still surviving, and you can actually visit and view that when you are at Jerusalem.

Just south of [the] Jaffa Gate towers is Herod's Palace. It was built by Herod the Great, so obviously, with Herod off the scene, this is probably used by the Roman governor when he was in the city rather than by Herod Antipas who, after all, didn't have quite the—what shall we say—political standing that the Roman governor had. That is the alternate site for the Roman trial of Jesus. So if Pilate was down here, then that's where it was because we are told Pilate came out and went back in, etc. Or if it was being used for some other reason at the festival, for instance, Pilate might have felt safer in the Antonia Fortress, then it would have been there. Whatever, those are the two candidates for that.

There was a Sanhedrin building, and we think it was near the Temple and on the platform somewhere, but we do not know now where it was. The rabbinic literature calls it the Hall of Hewn Stones. This is probably the site of Jesus' condemnation on Friday morning before they take him to trial and to get Pilate to validate their sentence.

The model of Jerusalem at the Holy Land Hotel [now at the Israel Museum] also attempts to place a chariot racing stadium called [the] Hippodrome in Greek—"horse run." If you have ever seen the film *Ben Hur*, they have a very authentic looking hippodrome with a long straight-away with sharp turns on either end. So rather than being a nice oval as horse racing places are in Western culture, there was a long straight-away and [a] sharp turn, and then long straight-away, etc. I refer you to *Ben Hur* for that particular thing. The location is uncertain, although some put it in the Tyropoean Valley; that is where this model puts it.

Josephus also tells us there was a theatre in Jerusalem. So both of those features would have been much more Hellenistic; they certainly were not Jewish sorts of things. The location of that is uncertain. Most of us when we think of a theatre either think of a movie theatre or, perhaps, we think of Shakespeare's Globe theatre or something of that sort. The Greek and Roman theatres, particularly Greek theatres, were kind of half-circle often cut into the side of the hill and with stone, I guess, though they may have used concrete as well. Bleachers [were] around going around higher and higher with various aisles running down through them. So this is the actual model [that] has been used even into the twentieth century for theatres and various kinds of stadiums as well. They would probably have been used to perform plays of one sort or another. We are told by some of your Jewish writers that some of the Hellenistic Jews had, in fact, constructed plays of Ezekiel and that sort of thing, so that there were religious plays rather than just the pagan Greek plays and the very lewd Roman plays around.

### **Sites Related to Jesus' Ministry**

Some other sites related to Jesus' ministry: The pool of Bethesda, you remember, in John 5 where Jesus finds a lame person at the pool of Bethesda. The tradition is at least that he was waiting for the movement of the water, etc. I don't think the best text of John 5 supports the tradition, but it appears that at least somebody, perhaps in a marginal note, entered a note about that. Certainly the narrative of John 5 indicates that the lame guy had some such thing in mind.

We're told this pool had five porticos. A portico is a term for these covered porches, usually with columns on either side to hold up the roofs. Lo and behold, just north of the Temple and northeast of the Antonia Fortress, they have found buried pretty deeply at this point with the rubble over the centuries—but now dug out a pool that had four porch-ways around the outside and one across the middle dividing it into two pools. So the general belief is it is the pool of Bethesda; [it] is the particular place where Jesus healed the lame man.

There is another pool in the ministry of Jesus; that is the pool of Siloam where Jesus sent the fellow who was blind. You remember he made clay and put it on the blind man's eyes. The location of the pool of Siloam has been known for a long, long time. It is south of the Temple, south slightly west of the Temple in the Tyropoean Valley right down near the south end of the city where the Tyropoean and Hinnom valleys come together. That has been excavated also and is narrated for us in John 9.

Some other places are the Upper Room where the Last Supper was held. Well, there is a traditional site of the Upper Room, and it is on the second floor. The problem is, from Josephus' descriptions, there does not appear to have been any second floors left after the Romans were finished with Jerusalem in AD 70. So it might be near the site; it is hard to say. But that is the traditional one. If you are in Jerusalem as a tourist, they will take you to that. The architecture there is what I would call as a non-architect Gothic, or something like that. So it is from the

Crusader period, clearly.

Caiaphas' House is a place where Jesus was taken for perhaps a preliminary hearing of some sort with possibly, with a part or maybe even all of, the Sanhedrin there. That is traditionally in the Upper City, and a site is shown for that, and even a little cave where Jesus is claimed to have been held as a prisoner overnight. I don't know what to say about that. It was a shrine of some sort for Christians a few centuries later, but whether they have the right site is somewhat hard to be sure of.

Gethsemane we know is an olive grove in the Kidron Valley on the slopes of the Mount of Olives, and there are several sites claimed by various religious groups.

That brings us last of all to Calvary, or Golgotha. There are three sites that I am aware of up now that are claimed. That is up from two when I first taught this course. The traditional one is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. That may very well be authentic, but it certainly does not look very authentic any more. It has had a church built over it for probably at 1500 years at least. It is the most widely recognized and has been recognized since the time of Constantine. They show you a place where Calvary was and a place where the tomb was, and that sort of thing; and for at least Western Christians, it looks too ornate and such and kind of turns you off.

There is Gordon's Calvary—a site that, I guess it was, General Charles Gordon suggested that probably looks more like what Calvary looked like in Jesus' time, but the evidence is rather strongly against its historicity. The tomb there is not a new tomb, which is what the Gospels tell us the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea was; but this tomb appears to go back to Iron Age time, so many centuries old by New Testament times.

Ernest Martin has done a number of things in suggesting a date for the birth of Christ that is fairly close to the traditional date, but not very close to the date

that has been used for the last few centuries of 4 or 5 BC. He goes with 1 BC, 2 BC actually. He has also suggested a site for Golgotha on the Mount of Olives. He basically claims the centurion standing on Mount Calvary was able to see the Temple curtain ripped in half. As I read the text over, it doesn't look like that is necessary to the text, though perhaps you can read it that way. So he puts Golgotha east of Jerusalem, so in the direction that the Temple actually faced, and puts it on the Mount of Olives. He puts it near the site of the slaughtering of the red heifer citing typological reasons as well as historical reasons. So that is his suggestion.

Well, that is a quick tour. There is lots and lots more that can be said, and I hear Ted has some good stuff up on the geography and archaeology and such of Jerusalem [“Get Lost in Jerusalem” and 6 video lectures by Drs. Elaine and Perry Phillips on “The Historical Geography of Israel: an Introduction,” free online] and Palestine, so I refer you to those here, but this is what I have in my Synoptic Gospels course. Thank you for your attention.

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## **Dr. Robert C. Newman, Synoptics, Lecture 11**

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### **Exegesis of Miracle Accounts**

#### **Survey of Gospel Miracles**

We're continuing with our Synoptic Gospels course. We've looked at, so far, eight of our twelve units: the Historical Jesus, Jewish Background, Introduction to Exegesis and Narratives, Authorship and Date of the Synoptics, Exegeting Parables, Gospels as Literary Works, the Synoptic Problem, Geography of Palestine and Jerusalem. We have four more to go.

This morning we're going to be looking at miracle accounts, and exegeting miracle accounts. I want to say a word or two here about the genre. In the genre "miracle story," the definition of that kind of genre would be a narrative focusing on a miracle as its main feature. Usual features of this genre, besides those of narrative (obviously it is a type of narrative), are: that in order for the person to tell us [the event] in an efficient, convenient way the problem would be narrated, then the request for help, then the actions of the miracle worker, and finally the result. That might be healing or a deliverance, [and] there might be a response from the spectators, or there might be even the response of the demon if it involves demonization of some sort.

The function of miracle accounts in the Gospels—one of the major features I think—is that the person of Jesus is seen through his actions, and we see that indicated several places: "Jesus did many other things, but these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Messiah and have life in his name" etc. They also indicate the redemptive activity of God as well. There are a lot of miracles in

the Synoptic Gospels, probably roughly the same order of magnitude for numbers of miracles as there are for the number of parables in the Gospels.

I've categorized the miracles under "healings," "nature miracles," and "resurrections." And so, here is the list I've got: A man with leprosy, narrated in Matthew 8, Mark 1, and Luke 5; the Centurion's servant, narrated in Matthew 8 and Luke 7; Peter's mother-in-law, narrated in Matthew 8, Mark 1, and Luke 4; the Gadarene demoniacs, narrated in Matthew 8, Mark 5, and Luke 8; a paralyzed man, in Matthew 9, Mark 2, and Luke 5; the woman with the bleeding in Matthew 9, Mark 5, and Luke 8; two blind men just narrated in Matthew 9; and the man who is mute and also possessed in Matthew 9; man with a shriveled hand in Matthew 12, Mark 3, and Luke 6; and the man who is blind, mute, and possessed in Matthew 12 and Luke 11.

Then there's the Canaanite woman's daughter, narrated in Matthew 15 and Mark 7; the boy with the demon in Matthew 17, Mark 9, and Luke 9; and then the two blind men narrated in Matthew 20, Mark 10, and Luke 18. That's all of them in Matthew that are healings.

Then there are the deaf mute in Mark 7; the man possessed in the synagogue in Mark 1 and Luke 4; the blind man at Bethsaida, in Mark 8; crippled woman, Luke 13; the man with dropsy in Luke 14; the ten lepers in Luke 17; the high priest's servant who is healed, his ear healed, in Luke 22; and then put in the official's son in John 4 and the sick man at Bethesda in John 5. Those would be the healing miracles.

Nature miracles: the calming of the storm in Matthew 8, Mark 4, and Luke 8; the feeding of the 5,000 in Matthew 14, Mark 6, Luke 9; the walking on the water in Matthew 14 and Mark 6; feeding of the 4,000 in Matthew 15 and Mark 8; the coin in the fish's mouth in Matthew 17; the fig tree withered [in] Matthew 21

and Mark 11; and then, just in Luke, the catch of fish in Luke 5; and then turning water into wine in John 2; and another catch of fish in John 21.

And then resurrections, not counting Jesus' resurrection: Jairus' daughter raised in Matthew 9, Mark 5, and Luke 8; and then the widow of Nain's son in Luke 7; and then Lazarus in John 11:1-44.

### **Miracle of the Demons and the Pigs: Mark 5**

For our sample of miracle we are to look at for exegesis here, we will look at the miracle of demons and pigs as found in Mark 5:1-20. This is my translation here: "And they (this would be Jesus and the disciples) went to the other side of the lake to the region of the Gerasenes." And there are several variant readings there with diverse support in each of the Synoptic Gospels. In Mark it looks like the better support is Gerasenes. "And when he had gotten out of the boat, immediately there met him in the tombs a man with an unclean spirit. The man had his home among the tombs, and not even with a chain was anyone any longer able to bind him, for he had been bound many times with fetters and chains, but the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the fetters broken, and no one was able to subdue him. So continually, night and day, he was in the tombs and the hills crying out and beating himself with stones.

"And when he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell at his feet. And crying out with a loud voice he said, 'Why are you bothering me, Jesus, son of God, Most High? I abjure you by God, do not torment me.' For Jesus was saying to him, 'Come out of the man, you unclean spirit.' And he (that is Jesus) asked him, 'What is your name?' and he said to him, 'My name is Legion, because we are many.' And he begged him strongly not to send them out of the region.

"Now there was a large herd of pigs feeding there on the mountain, so they begged him, saying, 'Send us to the pigs that we may enter into them,' and he

permitted them. And the unclean spirits went out of the man and entered into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the slope into the lake, about 2,000 of them, and they drowned in the sea.

"And their herdsmen fled, told the story in the city and in the country, and they (the people of these places) came to see what had happened. And they came to Jesus, and they saw the demoniac sitting, dressed and sane, the one who had had the legion, and they became afraid. And the ones who had seen it told them what had happened to the demoniac and to the pigs, and they began to beg him to depart from their area (they begged Jesus), and while he was getting into the boat, the former demoniac begged him that he might be with him, but Jesus would not allow him. He said to him, 'Go home to your people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, how much he had mercy on you.' And he went away, and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and all were amazed."

Well, that's a translation of the passage. I didn't really deal with some of the grammatical features lurking there, but we'll let them ride for now.

Little bit about the geography: The location of this miracle is somewhat complicated by the variant readings for the region given in verse one. We get "Gerasenes" region, the "Gadarenes," region and the "Gergesenes" and those are all terms referring to the inhabitants, and correspond to the town names of Gerasa, Gadara, and Gergesa. And those are all towns in that region. Two of them are the big Decapolis cities, Gadara and Gerasa, and the other appears to be the name of a village which still is known as Korsi, right in the kind of, well, the Sea of Galilee doesn't quite have corners, but it's in the northeast edge of the sea.

### **Discussion of the Demons and the Pigs: Location**

If one looks at a historical map of the area, say the map in the front, the cover of the UBS Greek New Testament, Gerasa is a full 35 miles southeast of the lake. Gadara is about 5 miles southeast of the lake, across a deep gorge, and Gergesa is thought to be near the lake, somewhere north of the middle of the east side, and as I said a moment ago, we think where the village Korsi is today. Gerasa and Gadara as I said are large towns, two of the ten cities, the Decapolis. Gergesa was probably small.

The location would seem to favor Gergesa as the site, except that it appears that the Decapolis cities had fishing and docking rights on the lake. Notice the text says, “The *region* of the Gerasenes, Gadarenes, Gergesenes,” in all three Gospels, rather than “region of Gerasa” or something of that sort. We now know that there are still ruins of ancient docks at various places on the east side of the lake. A few years ago the lake was unusually low, and some of this material showed up.

As far as geography is concerned, there's a steep slope running down close to the shore, both near Gergesa down on the southeast end of the lake, which might have been the fishing territory for either Gerasa or Gadara. So either location is possible. You obviously need a fairly steep slope for the pigs to run down. So that's a little bit about geography. There are two candidates, the traditional one is the one in the northeast side of the lake.

### **Demons**

Belief in demons is generally rejected in Western secular culture, but is very widespread in traditional cultures throughout the world. The Bible is quite specific on their existence, though it says little about what they are. The standard idea is that they're fallen angels of some sort. But that is basically because we know almost nothing about the unseen world, and so we tend to simplify things; but we've got various hints that the unseen world is probably as complicated as

ours. We tend to lump as angels the seraphim and cherubim, and we don't really know for sure. So we'll probably leave it at that.

The Bible is quite clear then and quite specific on their existence, but it says little about what they are nor where they came from and such. There are no clear examples of demon possession in the Old Testament. Saul was harassed by an evil spirit in 1 Samuel 16. Ahab's prophets are misled by a deceiving spirit in 1 Kings 22, and the incident of the sons of God and daughters of men in Genesis 6 may be demonic. Demons are referred to in connection with false worship in Deuteronomy 32:17 and Psalm 106:37. By contrast, demon possession is mentioned frequently in the Gospels, and once or twice in the Acts.

The presence of demons in a narrative complicates its interpretation, as we can't always tell who is acting. Is it the person who is demonized, on his own initiative, or is it the demons controlling his activities? In our passage, is it the demoniac or the demons? Is it the pigs or the demons? This reminds us again there is a great deal that we do not know about the unseen world.

### **Structure**

Think a little about the features of this passage as a miracle account. The problem is narrated: the demoniac is introduced by, for a twenty verse passage, a fairly extensive description of his malady and the affects it has had on his life.

Request for help: in this particular case it's not clear that there is any, unless the initial movement of the man towards Jesus is a result of his initiative rather than that of the demons. Imagine some kind of scenario that he can hear the demons talking in his head, and one of them says, "Look, there is Jesus," or something of that sort. The demoniac then figures it's now or never, and starts off running towards Jesus. But we can also imagine other phenomena where the demons just are saying, "Look, here's a group coming ashore, we'll get them!" and they come charging down there and don't realize until they get very close that one

of them is Jesus. So we don't know whether we have a request for help here in our particular account.

Actions of the Miracle Worker: Jesus speaks with the demons and allows them to go into the pigs.

Result: the man is delivered and the pigs are drowned. We're not sure of the response of the demons. Do they drive the pigs into the water to get rid of Jesus? Does Jesus drive the pigs into the water to get rid of the demons? Or do the pigs panic and commit suicide? It's one of the complications where you just see what happened outside here, and you don't know what's going on inside the demoniac or the pigs.

The response of the spectators is fairly straightforward: the pig herders run to the village. You get the impression they're not the owners, and probably they run there to get their story in first to make sure the initial impression is that they are not responsible. The spectators, when they get there, are fearful, and they want Jesus to leave. Fear in the presence of the supernatural is, of course, a common phenomenon all throughout human history, and we see that very much in the gospel accounts, and Bible accounts, as well as external materials. The former demoniac wants to come to Jesus. So those are some of the features of the passage as a miracle account.

### **Miracle Story as Narrative**

But it's also a narrative, so we've got the standard features of a narrative: actors or characters, events and actions, scenes, plot, etc. The chief character is obviously Jesus, then the demoniac. We're not sure what his action is until he is healed in the sense of what is from his own initiative. The demons converse with Jesus and they act as a group. The pig herders don't speak—that is they are not narrated in their speaking—but they head off for the village. The disciples are not explicitly identified, but they are probably the major ones who are narrating the

events to the villagers when they arrive there a few minutes later, and the villagers act as a group.

Then some actions: Jesus and his disciples arrive at the other side of the lake (the other side as compared with Capernaum, across the top of the lake, or even down the whole body of the lake, depending on which of the two sites are right). The demoniac runs to meet Jesus, and then our narrative gives an aside to sketch his background situation. It is characteristic when introducing a character in an account to say a little bit about who he is, where he came from, or something like that. This one is rather long since this guy has a rather doleful history. Jesus commands the demons to come out, and some interesting phenomenon here: they resist and, rather ironically, they call on God to protect them. They adjure him by God not to throw them out (the Luke account has "throw them into the abyss.") They admit to being a legion.

A little background there: a legion was a standard army unit in the Roman army, and in full strength was about 6,000 men, so presumably the remark is to indicate that we're looking perhaps at thousands of demons in this fellow. They ask for permission to go into the pigs. Jesus permits them, and the pigs stampede into the lake and drown.

The pig herders head for town and return with a crowd. The demoniac, by this time, is now dressed and sane. The crowd, when they realized what has happened, ask Jesus to leave. He does, but he instructs the former demoniac to tell others what God has done for him. Then we are told the demoniac tells the story throughout the Decapolis.

The scenes: there's just one. It all takes place at the lakeside, except for the closing statement that tells you what the demoniac went off and did.

Plot: not real complicated. Jesus rescues a man from a mob of demons. And the incident provides some insight into human nature, demonic nature, and into

Jesus' nature.

### **Theological Reflections**

Well, my students and I thought about what was going on here, and we then tried to think about what kind of theological lessons we could get from this miracle. Since miracle accounts typically in the Gospels are intended to tell us about Jesus, the first thing to ask then is: What does this account tell us about Jesus?

The account says he is the Son of God, though the source for this particular information is not great. It's the demons talking, and since they are liars, you don't know if they are speaking the truth here and doubtlessly that is part of their purpose and why Jesus does not encourage the demons to speak. They are trying to say things that will cause trouble.

So one way for a liar to complicate things is to mix up his lies with some truths, and then people can't tell for sure what he is saying. But, in fact, he is the Son of God, and we know that from elsewhere; and, of course, typically, as we interpret passages in Scripture, we are seeking to interpret them in terms of our knowledge of the whole Scripture, which is, after all, why I suggested back earlier in our introduction to exegeting Jesus, that it is important to read the Bible over and over again until you have a good idea what is in it and know what is not in it. You can realize that when Jesus says, "You must be born again," you can realize he is not talking about reincarnation as [reincarnation is denied] in the rest of the Bible. A Hindu or Buddhist might react to that way if that's the only passage they had seen.

So Jesus is the Son of God. He is able to subdue demons by the thousands. So even a very large crew like this is not able to resist him in what you would say in an ultimate sense. He has compassion on those who are in bondage to Satan.

We don't know what this fellow's responsibility was in winding up this way. It might have been substantial, but Jesus has compassion upon him.

We see something also important that we observe elsewhere in other passages. Jesus will allow people to go their own way. So here the people want him to leave, so he leaves. There are hints, particularly with this remark about Decapolis that, perhaps, explain some of the features surrounding the feeding of the 4,000 later, which also appears to be over in this area. That is after he has given the former demoniac a few months to do his work there, are a lot of people are ready to listen to him when he comes back again. So those are some things I saw in the passage regarding Jesus.

Regarding demons: This passage is very clear that they exist and that they are dangerous. This is not just a primitive model for insanity. The question [that] has arisen to my mind is: could insanity be a modern disguise for demons? We don't understand everything and, it's not necessary to claim that insanity is only a disguise for demons, but that cases of it might well be. It reminds us again that we can't see into the unseen world.

These demons can apparently see spiritual realities that we can't see. They somehow know something about Jesus; presumably it's by seeing something that they can tell who he is or something of that sort. These demons are stronger than men or animals so that they are able to control this fellow to a greater or lesser extent. They are able to control the animals as well. It's possible that they can only control one at a time, so that when these demons left the man there were enough of them to control the pigs which was said to be about two thousand or so. We don't know.

However, demons are subject to God. We don't live in a universe like the one the Zoroastrians saw, in which they had two gods of equal power who fight

back and forth. God is the one who is over all of his creatures whether they're in rebellion or not.

We have some insight regarding humans as well. We pick this up from the demoniac and the crowds and pick it up from the disciples as well in some incidents. I see three things here in that regard: first, people tend to put material things ahead of spiritual things, their own concerns ahead of others. So here's this great thing that has happened to this fellow: he's delivered, etc. There may well have been some people in the crowd who were real excited about that, although it doesn't appear that his own family is even in the neighborhood anymore. But the major concern of the crowds seems to be about the pigs and perhaps fear that something else might disastrously happen if Jesus stays around too long, so they want him to leave.

Second, people are in some cases subject to demons, and we don't know much of the technology of that. You can find deliverance ministries who will give you lots of details. But how much of that is real and accurate information is very hard to tell.

Third, we also see that humans can also witness to God's work in their lives without special theological training. Instead of keeping this former demoniac with him so that he can learn more about Jesus or something like that, it's enough for a start that he go out and tell people what Jesus has done in his own life.

Well that raises the question then of how might—if we are preaching or teaching, or at a Bible study, Sunday school class, or something—how might we preach this particular passage? Well, I suggest a few things here. It would be rather valuable to help people see that satanic power is real. It's not just a joke about somebody going around in red leotards with a pitchfork. It's not a superstition, and it's not just a metaphor for institutional oppression, which seems to be the liberal take of this generation. The principality and powers, or various

political systems and institutions oppressing of the people, is one way Satan works. But that is not the only way he works. Satan is not reducible merely to institutional activities of that sort.

It would also be helpful to help people see that we need not fear satanic power, for God is even now in control; but we must flee to Christ for protection and deliverance. We are not strong enough. The “name it and claim it” sort of thing does not work in the sort of sense that we can do that on our own—if we just have faith enough or something. If we are really trusting who Jesus is, really trusting who God is, God can give us the power to do it. But it does not guarantee that he is going to do it. He doesn’t guarantee that we should try and get into situations where he must bail us out. That is kind of equivalent to satanic temptation to Jesus to jump off the temple and let God’s angels catch him before he hits the bottom.

Our responsibility is to seek to do each day what God wants us to do to be the kind of person he wants us to be; and if he brings us into circumstances where we face something like this, then depend upon him for whatever deliverance. We are someone who needs and trusts in him. In that case we do not need to fear satanic power.

We also find a lesson here, I think, that we see in the villagers. We should beware putting off God and preferring to go our own way instead. Rather than have this dangerous Jesus around, we just ask him to go away because God might just let us have our way, which might be a disaster. Something that those of us who are Christians should take to heart from this is that we who are Christians should be able to tell others of what Christ has done for us, starting with what we already know, and connecting this involvement with the ability we have in seeking to build those up as the Lord gives us opportunities. That’s my take on this particular miracle.

What we should do then is to take these miracle accounts as especially designed to show us who Jesus is and what he has come to do: to judge sin, to rescue people from Satan and from their own sinfulness, and to restore people to wholeness, as we see this person restored.

That's our very quick discussion on exegeting miracle accounts.

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## **Dr. Robert C. Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Lecture 12**

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### **Synoptic Theology**

#### **Biblical Theology of the Synoptic Gospels**

We are continuing our Synoptic Gospels here, twelve units, if you'd like. We're just about ready to start the tenth unit in this twelfth lecture and that is: "Biblical Theology of the Synoptics."

A little introduction to biblical theology before we jump into the subject here. The phrase "biblical theology" has two rather different uses. One use of the term "biblical theology" is in contrast to unbiblical theology. Biblical theology is that doctrine which is in accordance to the Bible, the teaching of the Scripture. In a sense, biblical theology is orthodox theology. But another use of the term is in contrast to "systematic theology." In this sense, biblical theology is the study of how a part, usually, or even the whole Scripture, presents theology in its own terms, vocabulary, images, structure, and that sort of thing. In this sense, biblical theology is trying to see what terms, pictures, etc., John used to portray God's word, the Lord's gospel, [and that] are in First, Second, and Third John, [and] in contrast to the terms Paul used in his epistles, or what terms Isaiah used in his prophecy. Because God worked through the individuals and created them with different abilities, put them in cultures with their various temperaments and styles, and put them in different periods in history, you wind up with different terms being used. We're here interested in the second usage, though; of course, we want our study to be biblical theology in both senses.

The subject of biblical theology is really a vast one, and here we have time and space to look only at a sample. So the first thing we want to do is to look for

some unifying themes in the Synoptic Gospels. Terminology of the Synoptic Gospels is often different from the rest of the New Testament even from the gospel John which covers the same events.

### **Word Statistics**

One way to get a feel for some of the emphases of the Synoptic Gospels, as distinct from the rest of the New Testament, is from a study of word statistics comparing the relatively frequent usage of various words in the Synoptics versus the frequency of those words in the New Testament as a whole. As our sample study we're going to consider the word frequencies in the Synoptics and in the whole of the New Testament. For this purpose remember that the length of the text of the Synoptics is at  $1/3$  or say  $.33$  of the entire New Testament. So if the words occur way more than a third of the occurrences of the New Testament, and they are Synoptics, then they are especially common in the Synoptics. If they're way below the  $1/3$ , then they are rather uncommon in the Synoptics.

So let's start here. Look at the topics of "Christology," "love," "faith," "salvation," "forgiveness," and "kingdom" and then various terms that occur under these. So take Christology first of all: take the relevant words "Christ," the phrase "Son of Man," and the phrase "son of God."

The term "Christ" occurs forty times in the Synoptics and occurs 750 times in the whole New Testament. So if you work out the fraction  $.05$ , [it's] very low compared to  $.33$ . So the term "Christ" is actually rarer in the Synoptics than with the rest of the New Testament. On the other hand, the term "Son of Man" occurs seventy times in the Synoptics and only eighty-seven in the whole New Testament, so 80% of the occurrences are in the Synoptics, which is quite high; and it turns out almost all the rest of them are in John.

The term "son of God" occurs twenty-six times in the Synoptics out of seventy-nine in the New Testament, which works out to be  $.33$ , which,

accidentally, happens to be right on the average. So there's an example, where "Christ" is a rare Synoptic term, "Son of Man" is an unusually common Synoptic term and "son of God" is about the same as it is throughout the rest of the New Testament as a whole.

Take the two terms for "love," not thinking of the various terms for love, but the verb *agapao* and *agape*. The term *agapao* occurs twenty-three times in the Synoptics out of 126 in the whole New Testament, so it is low—.18 compared to the .33 we think of. *Agape* only occurs twice in the Synoptic Gospels out of 107 in the whole New Testament, so .02. So it's very low. So although Jesus is frequently seen doing loving things in the Synoptics, that terminology is not the standard Synoptic terminology. When you think about John, you immediately realize that's a very high frequency word there.

"Faith" we take again as two words. The verb *pisteuo*, to believe, to trust; and *pistis*, trust, trustworthiness, etc. *Pisteuo* 34/233 is .15, so low; and then *pistis*, that is 24/233, so .10 and also low. So surprisingly, "faith" is not a real common Synoptic term, although, again, if you're familiar at all with it, you realize that's a big Pauline term and a big Johannine term as well, but not in the Synoptics.

"Salvation": Here we pick three words. The verb *sodzo*, the abstract noun *soteria*, and the actor—a word *soter*, savior. *Sodzo*: 4/42, just under .09, low. *Soteria*, 45/103, .14, high. And *soter*, 2/24, .08, low. So the Gospels talk about rescue, deliverance, [and] salvation rather frequently, but they don't talk much about the verb itself, nor the actor spoken of at this point, which again is a little surprising. Again you'll remember my discussion of the literary features of the Synoptic Gospels—that they don't bring in their post-resurrection perspective. They are trying to help you look at Jesus as he appeared to the people; or his death on the cross and its significance became apparent even as writers know something of that sort. But they're trying to let you feel what it would look like.

"Forgiveness": The verb *ophieme*, to forgive and forgiveness, and *ophesis*, forgive [appear] 114/144 [and] is .79, so that's high. And *ophesis*" [is] 8/17, .47,

which is high, but nowhere near as high as *ophieme*. So the Gospels appear to be about forgiveness.

And then “kingdom”: *basileia* is the kingdom and *basileo* to rule. *Basileia* 119/160, [or] .74, so that’s very high. Kingdom is a theme in the Gospels, in the Synoptic Gospels particularly; you may have guessed that if you read them before. *Basileus* [king] is 44/110, or .40, a little high; and *basileo*, to reign, [is] 4/19, [or] .21, a little low.

So I asked my students, “Why do you think ‘Christ’ is relatively rare in the Gospels, but ‘Son of Man’ is enormously common?” I got various responses, but this is part of what Wrede’s “Messianic Secret” is based upon. Jesus did not walk into town and say, “Hello, fellows; I’m the Messiah.” He did not, as Satan suggest that he do, make a soft landing in the temple and say, “Hello, fellows; the Messiah has arrived.” That is not the way God planned to have Jesus come, and that would have immediately polarized everything; and the authorities would either have to give in to them without repenting and obviously interfere with a substitutionary death as well. So we can’t work all that out. God is back there working out all the strands of the plot and various plots as they weave together, but that is at least part of it.

Why is the term “Son of Man” enormously common? It is not easy to see, but it's Jesus’ choice of the term he is going to use for himself. It’s a term, that if you hit on the right passage, it basically says, “I am the Messiah.” But there are a bunch of other passages which might just mean “I’m a human,” which, of course, he is. Or you might think, “What does God mean when he calls Ezekiel ‘Son of Man’”? Does it mean just human, which it might; or does it mean some person chosen to carry out God’s commands? So it is ambiguous [as] was the intention there.

### **Kingdom in the Synoptics**

Hermann Ridderbos in his book, *The Coming of the Kingdom*, which is a

biblical theology of the Synoptics, picks up these and other features as well by seeing the major theme of the Synoptics to be the coming of the kingdom. As a sample study of biblical theology, we want to here summarize Ridderbos' main points with occasional suggestions where I disagree with him, and things of that sort. The kingdom—as a major theme in biblical theology of the Synoptics—there are 31 passages where the phrase “kingdom of heaven” is used, and they are all in Matthew; plus [there are] another 49 passages with “kingdom of God,” and only 4 of these are in Matthew. We are going to study these passages plus others which use the term “kingdom” without either of those endings, but with a context which makes it clear that it's God's kingdom that is in mind rather than Herod's kingdom, or Caesar's kingdom, or something like that. Plus [we will look at] other passages which seem to be talking about the kingdom but do not use the term at all. That's the trick when you get into word studies as [you are] trying to figure out what they tell you about a book or something, [or] to find the places where the passage has places where the phrase is used or places where a synonym is used, and that sort of thing.

### **The Kingdom Characterized**

Well, first of all, the kingdom characterized: It seems to me to be a mistake to make any huge distinctions between the phrases “kingdom of heaven” and “kingdom of God.” Mark and Luke never used the former phrase; they never use “kingdom of heaven,” but use the latter phrase “kingdom of God” in places where Matthew uses “kingdom of heaven”: for example, Matthew 4:17 versus Mark 1:15, or Matthew 5:16 versus Luke 6:20. In fact, Matthew himself uses both “kingdom of God” and “kingdom of heaven” in parallel in Matthew 19:23 and 24. The standard guess today is that Matthew uses the pious Jewish practice of substitutes for explicit references to God. So among modern orthodox Jews writing in English, you'll see them writing G\_D instead of God. Or, if they are using a sort of pseudo-Hebrew, they put *Elokim* instead of *Elohim*; they put a “k” instead of an “h,” or other things like that. That's a modern way, if you like, of

avoiding the use of the name of God. We think the name “Jehovah” comes from something of the sort as well, where the consonants for Yahweh are given the vowels for “*adonai*.” I will not run into an explanation of that. Well, one of the substitutes used in New Testament times for “God” was “heaven.” There were a bunch of other substitutes as well: “The Name,” “The Place,” and things of that sort.

Ridderbos suggests that the kingdom spoken of by Jesus in the Synoptics can be characterized by the following terms: the kingdom is theocratic; the kingdom is dynamic; the kingdom is messianic; the kingdom is future, but the kingdom is also present. So let’s say a word or two about each of those.

Theocratic is pretty straightforward—the kingdom is ruled by God. So that seems to be the correct terminology for “kingdom of God”: that it is God’s kingdom; and “kingdom of heaven” [expresses] as well what is said about this particular kingdom. So Jesus is talking about God ruling in some way.

It’s dynamic in the sense that the term “kingdom” is not primarily used as our English word “kingdom” is. Our English word “kingdom” is primarily used to refer to a spatial territory. So the United Kingdom are the territories ruled by the king or queen of England and in this case that is England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland as a United Kingdom. But rather the term “kingdom” is used to refer to the kings’ activity. So it’s the rule of God, the rule of heaven, if you like. And that kind of rule can take place among God’s followers in a world that is otherwise in rebellion against him. So in the “kingdom of heaven,” we are going to come back and talk about the “already and not yet,” but in the already sense—in the hearts, if you like, and in the lives of his followers; but one day it will be universal in this other sense.

The kingdom of God is then not only theocratic and dynamic, but it’s also messianic. It’s messianic in that God rules through his mediator, the Messiah. “Messiah” is a term that comes from the Hebrew word “to anoint,” and *christos*

comes from the Greek word “to anoint”; and they both have the idea that God has selected someone to function as his mediator, or agent, in some type of activity.

As we’ve already seen in the Synoptics, Jesus uses the term “Son of Man” to refer to this, but to do so in an ambiguous way; but “Son of Man” has a very important background in Daniel chapter 7 where the four kingdoms representing the successive kingdoms of humans on earth are represented as wild beasts. Then one like a "son of man," one like a human, comes before God, and he receives from God the eternal, universal kingdom. So the Son of Man is the one who is going to be the eternal, universal ruler; and the eternal, universal ruler is basically a definition of Messiah, if you like. So while the term is not used there, that’s what it means in that passage.

### **"Already but Not Yet" Aspects of the Kingdom**

The kingdom is future in that it is regularly described in strongly eschatological terms and is not yet having come. Yet it is present in some real sense, as the kingdom also comes in Jesus’ first coming. This solution seems to me to be better than the old traditional dispensational emphasis of the kingdom [that] was offered to the Jews and rejected, and so the kingdom was withdrawn and doesn’t come back again until the Millennium. I think when you work through the passage, it is already here in some sense. That brings us into Ridderbos’ discussion of, on the one hand, the kingdom is present and, on the other, this kingdom is provisional. So let’s look first at the idea that the kingdom of God is present, it’s already fulfilled, it’s already come.

The present aspect of the kingdom can be seen in a number of themes. For instance, Satan, the Wicked One, has already been overcome. He has already been defeated at Jesus’ temptation, which is pretty crucial when you think of his temptation as parallel to Adam and Eve’s temptation; but theirs was in the garden, and he is in the wilderness. [For] Israel’s temptation, they are in the wilderness; he is in the wilderness, et cetera. So it seems his defeat is at Jesus’ temptation.

When Jesus' disciples cast out demons, he is overcoming, and even they are overcoming, Satan's power in the rather fawning behavior of the demons, and perhaps even in the fall of Satan, narrated for us in Luke 10:18 through 19, Luke 11:21 and the other parallels in the Gospels. I'm inclined to put at least one of those as viewing the future rather than actually having occurred; yet that's one of the places where Ridderbos and I would differ.

Jesus' miraculous power is already being displayed at his first coming, making visible the restoration of creation, and that is, in fact, one of the themes, if you like, as you look through the healing miracles and the nature miracles, and such restoration of creation and the fulfilling [of] messianic prophecy as we see in Matthew 11:5 and 8:17. In the work of Jesus, God is visiting his people as the crowd shouts out in Luke 7:16.

The good news is already being proclaimed as predicted in Isaiah 52:7: "Good news, your God reigns," etc., [and] in Isaiah 61:1-2, which Jesus read in the Nazareth synagogue and proclaimed as fulfill this day in Luke 4:21. Jesus' followers, in some sense, already possess the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5: 3-10, "for theirs is the kingdom." Similarly, "Blessed are you because you see," whereas these others didn't see, Matthew 13:16-17. "This day salvation has come," Luke 19:9; or "Your names are written down" according to Luke 10:20. Jesus the Messiah is already here. The Messiah has come. He's identified [as] the Messiah, "my son," at his baptism (Matthew 3:17) and parallels at his transfiguration (Matthew 17:5 and parallels). They pick up the theme "my son" in 2 Samuel 7 and Psalm 2.

The "Son of Man" is present in lots of passages. Jesus' "I-sayings" are a powerful testimony to who he is, Matthew 11:28, 12:30 and 10:32-42. So the kingdom of God is present.

But this present kingdom is provisional, not yet complete—not the whole story. The biblical presentation is really more complex than just a present kingdom

or just a future kingdom. I remember when I was taking a required course in the Bible at Duke back in the early 60's; the liberals would regularly say, "Well, there were two different views, and some people thought Jesus and the kingdom had come, and some people thought it was eschatological, and somehow the sources mixed these together." But, in fact, the tension between the two is a very biblical theme. The kingdom is both present and future. Both elements occur, though the Gospels don't use our distinctions "present," "future;" or "first coming" and "second coming." They'd rather use the distinctions "this present age" and "the age to come." For example, see Mark 10:30. We see a unity with tension, which is reflected in John the Baptist when he sends messengers to Jesus in Matthew 11:2-6: "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" Jesus gives him a response: "Look at these things that are happening." John already knows these are things that are predicted about the Messiah.

So the time of the Evil One still continues. Satan still has power. So this is one sense in which the present kingdom is provisional. So in the Lord's Prayer, "Deliver us from the Evil One" is what we pray. Satan desires to have Peter, Luke 22:31. The tares are growing with the wheat, and the tares are the sons of the Evil One. The demons are afraid that Jesus has come to torment them before the time, Matthew 8:29. So, the time of the Evil One continues.

The miracles that Jesus does are merely signs. They're real miracles but they're not immediately followed by the consummation. Jesus limits their use, even when their use of the evidence is restricted and connected in one way or another with faith. So Jesus—think of the pool of Bethesda—there's this whole crowd of people there. Jesus heals one person. So the signs indicate the coming of the kingdom; they point to the end, but they are not even the beginning of the end, which is sketched for us in the Olivet Discourse: "These things are the beginning," etc. Their purpose is subservient to the preaching of the Gospel. They are to attract people; they are to tell us something about who Jesus is and to get people to listen to the Gospel. People don't always hear him that way; you can see from their

using the feeding [of the 5000] to get fed and come back for another course, if you'd like.

Jesus speaks to the crowd in parables to reveal and to conceal for those who do and don't understand the mystery of the kingdom [respectively]. The king is here, but the kingdom is not yet as expected. The parables the kingdom also show us that the sowing begins with Jesus' coming, but the harvest is not until the end of the age. The kingdom's advance is pictured not in terms of military conquest, but in terms of growth. The judgment is thus delayed. The tares are allowed to grow together along with the wheat until the end of the age.

The master in the parable of the pounds will go away to receive his kingdom and then return. Meanwhile, what people have done to others is treated as equivalent to what they've done to Jesus—in the sheep and goats material in Matthew 25.

During this delay, the kingdom is at work through the word of Jesus and the labors of the disciples. Several growth parables, [but] not all of them, picture the growth of the word. The parable of the pounds and talents picture a time for servants to use what has been entrusted to them. This labor that they are to do involves seeking what is lost.

The parable of [the] fig tree and the vineyard that the gardener is going to dig around it [the tree] and put more fertilizer on it, Luke 13, indicates there's still time for repentance.

The seeking is pictured in the lost sheep materials (Matthew 9, 10, 15 and Luke 15), [and] the parables of lost coin and lost son (Luke 15). In contrast to the harvesting done by the angels at the end of the age (Matthew 13), here the harvesting is done by Jesus' followers in this age (Matthew 9:35-38).

It is to the provisional kingdom that the "Servant of the Lord" materials [bring] along. The Christology of the Synoptics has two focal points—the Son of

Man and the Servant of the Lord, so picking up the Daniel passage and the Isaiah passage, if you like. The former emphasizes by means of Daniel 7, but with ambiguity, Jesus' kingship. The latter Servant of the Lord stresses his obedience and suffering. The temptation of the wilderness shows us that the path of glory lies through obedience, hardship, and suffering. Jesus refuses to take the quick, spectacular way, the soft landing at the Temple, or bowing down to Satan and getting all the kingdoms of the world. This is in fulfillment of the Suffering Servant passages in Isaiah 40-55. The "Messianic Secret" [discussed above] is necessary to rejection.

So what's the relationship between Jesus' kingdom and Jesus' cross? Well, there's obviously only a minor outworking of the kingdom before the cross. The crucifixion in some sense postpones the last judgment, opening space for the provisional present kingdom, and the preaching of the Gospel really only develops after the resurrection.

So that brings us to Ridderbos' discussion of the Gospel kingdom. What is this good news of the kingdom? Ridderbos sees two aspects: good news—salvation (that certainly sound like good news), and commandments (which doesn't sound like good news to most of us in this rather slack age). Strictly speaking, the good news is not news; it's a fulfillment of the Old Testament promises. It's good news to the poor, especially for the godly who were oppressed. The Beatitudes and the Luke presentation is clearer with the blessings and curses set beside each other. The godly who are oppressed are seen also in the parable of the unjust judge. Those who are oppressed are also seen as judged unfairly.

What salvation is being offered? What rescue is being offered? Well, Ridderbos says it's remission of sins! It's fulfilled in Jesus' coming and work. His good news of salvation is the antithesis of the rabbinic doctrine of reward, and this gets us a little bit into the old view of Paul versus the new view of Paul, etc., and I have to say in most lines I come down with the old view of Paul in this particular thing. Jesus' good news of salvation is kind of the opposite of the rabbinic view of

reward. Think of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:9-14. "God, I thank you I'm not like other guys, particularly this tax collector." It gives assurance of the certainty of salvation. It's fulfilled in the coming of Jesus, the true son of God. While it's not earned by us, those who are saved are characterized by doing the Father's will. Of course, it is earned by Jesus, so he earns it for us. And yet, those who are saved are characterized by doing the Father's will. It is a very important part of the Gospel which tends to get lost in this Lordship-salvation controversy with one side that basically says, "Well, nothing needs to show up in your life," whereas the biblical picture is if you are actually saved, these things will show up in your life.

How do the commandments fit into the good news? God's intention is for his children to be righteous. Why is it [we have] all this problem of judgment and hell and that sort of thing? It's because we're not righteous; God didn't save us for us to be unrighteous for eternity. God saved us to be righteous. God's demands are summarized as "righteousness." All other values we might have are to be sacrificed for the kingdom, that's what really counts. The good works we do demonstrate the presence of the kingdom. We fulfill the law as told on the Sermon on the Mount by giving it its full measure. The Sermon on the Mount in fact gives the antithesis to the rabbinic interpretation of the law: "You have heard it said but I say to you." Jesus is not against law, but against refusal to be fully committed to God's law, a rather different take than his common antinomian society.

The kingdom and the church: Ridderbos asks, "How is the kingdom related to the church?" Ridderbos suggests that the kingdom is God's work of salvation consummated in Jesus Christ. His rule is [that] this is going to happen, this is going to be worked out through Jesus. The church, by contrast, is the people who are called by God. They share in the bliss of the kingdom and, of course, they participate in Jesus' work of salvation by spreading the message and by being samples, if you like.

Ridderbos asks, "How is the kingdom related to the Lord's supper?" He

suggests that the Lord's Supper displays two themes: the death of Christ and the eschatological kingdom. With death of Christ, that is the eschatological kingdom. He [Jesus] says, "I won't eat of this again until I eat with you anew, and I won't drink of this unless I drink it with you anew in the kingdom, etc." "In as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do so until the Lord's coming."

The Lord's Supper makes a distinction between the commencement and [the] consummation of the kingdom. This is also seen in the provisional nature of the [Lord's] Supper. I remember Elio Cucaro, one [of] our grads [at Biblical Seminary] did a doctrinal dissertation on the Lord's Supper in the reformation. He gave a talk at Biblical Seminary and he said, "this is a picture of the eschatological kingdom that you drink a little cup and a little piece of bread." It's designed so you're not to mistake it for the actual supper itself. It is seen in the provisional nature of the supper mere tidbit "until I come." It is a picture of our table fellowship through Christ's death. It pictured Jesus as a sacrifice inaugurating the new covenant, the new covenant in his blood. That's interesting there: when Moses inaugurates the new covenant, he says, "This is the blood of the new covenant, and he sprinkles it on the people, on the outside of the people." Jesus says, "This is the blood of the covenant," and we take it inside ourselves—an interesting contrast there as well.

Against the Roman Catholic position, the Lord's Supper is a sacrificial meal rather than the sacrifice itself. In the Old Testament background, the sacrifice has already taken place, and the animal is cooked and prepared for, say, for a thank offering, or vow offering, or something instead of a meal, etc., because the sacrifice has already been made once for all time, as we see in the book of Hebrews, though it's not explicit here in the Gospels.

### **Future Kingdom**

Lastly, Ridderbos turns here to think of the future consummation of the

kingdom. Liberals suggest that Jesus and the disciples talked of the Second Coming occurring in the first century, but they were mistaken; that's the standard liberal view of the matter. But Ridderbos says this is a simplification of a complex problem by the selective discard of inconvenient data. A good methodological statement there, I think. That one of the features you see in liberal treatments of the Gospels is a very elaborate dividing up of the material, and [this led to] the elaborate, different discussions of circles and groups [of critics] that advocated these different things and advocating a very simplistic view of things. Whereas the biblical picture is, you obviously got heretics; but the unified teaching of the Scripture—and Jesus' true followers [are] trying to follow that—but the teaching itself has some complexities in it.

Ridderbos notes two things in Jesus' predictions: There are passion statements, which basically lead us to a picture of Isaiah's prediction of a suffering servant; and there are *parousia* statements, which arise out of and lead us back to Daniel's "Son of Man." These were not to put together before the resurrection, so the disciples didn't understand how to put them together.

The Great Commission then in Matthew 28:16-20 lifts the veil from this mystery and inaugurates a new period in salvation history. This had previously been implicit, so like the Gentiles [coming into the kingdom] and that sort of thing, but had not been made clear. The resurrection discloses an intimate relationship between Jesus' role as a servant and as the Son of Man. The events that took place during his resurrection—the temple veil tearing—the resurrection prefigures the end of the age, the Parousia. The end of the age itself is an orientation point, a goal, for the period following Jesus' resurrection. The disciples work and goals are now viewed in light of the Second Coming: namely, that a great task precedes the eschatological coming of the kingdom.

Jesus, however, gives no hint as to how much time span would elapse before the Parousia. Jesus' disciples are called to discern the times. The Second Coming is to be sudden, but signs are not excluded. We certainly won't need signs to recognize its occurrence. So Jesus gives us an example of the lightning flash in which you can be facing the wrong direction and you can [still] see the lightning—even with your eyes closed you can see the lightning. And the vultures you can [see] even when you can't see the carcass at that distance, but you see the vultures circling it. You don't have to be at the [exact place of the] Second Coming to see it; there will be signs pointing to it.

Jesus' main eschatological teachings, says Ridderbos, is given in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, Luke 21. It can be outlined as follows: There's first the beginning of sorrows: then there's the Great Tribulation; and then there's the Parousia, or the second coming. Ridderbos points out that the Great Tribulation refers to the fall of Jerusalem but not exclusively so, and I agree with him on that particular point. You are beginning to get some extreme preterists who say the fall of Jerusalem was the Second Coming, and there isn't going to be another. There are others who say that's at least what Olivet Discourse is about.

I think it's more than that. My read would be perhaps a little different than Ridderbos'—that events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem is kind of a "dress rehearsal" for the Second Coming. Ridderbos points out that Matthew and Mark coalesce two motifs: the fall of Jerusalem and the Second Coming. Again, my response would be, there is going to be another fall of Jerusalem in connection with the Second Coming, as well as the one in connection with the First Coming, if you like.

What are we to make of Jesus' time limit pronouncements as kind of a standard theme of liberal theology? Perry Phillips, when he was at Cornell, once went to Sage Chapel to hear Archbishop [James] Pike speak, and he tells me that one of Bishop Pike's statements was: "Well, Jesus said he's coming back again,

where is he? It's been 2,000 years, etc.” That, in fact, was already predicted that there'd be that kind of reaction.

### **This Generation**

Ridderbos' interpretation of what is meant by “this generation,” which Ridderbos' read is [that] certainty it is without any time indication, seems somewhat weak to me. I favor the said reference to be that Jesus is doing what is not uncommon in many, many of the prophecies of the Old Testament, and that is the listeners are asked to imagine that they're present when some future event occurs. So Jacob, in his last will and testament in front of his sons, says: “You Reuben, this'll happen to you; this'll happen to Judah, etc.,” but in fact they're going to happen to their descendants down the line quite a ways. So I take Jesus to be saying, “The generation that will not pass away” is the generation that sees these signs he's mentioned. The stuff is not going to be spread over a thousand years or something of that sort; the distinctive signs will come rather close to the end of the age.

Ridderbos thinks that “some standing here” refers to the resurrection. So “some standing here will see the kingdom coming in its power” refers to the resurrection. I have no objection to that being one of the references, but all three of the Synoptic Gospels immediately give the transfiguration: one of them without even a chapter break, and the other two with chapter breaks. But the Gospel writers didn't put the chapter breaks in, so that would be my read on that.

I believe, however, that Jesus' ambiguity in both these is intentional. He did not intend that we would know that it's not going to be for 2,000 years, or however long it's actually going to be.

The Parousia parables that Ridderbos [discusses] point to a substantial period between the ascension and the Parousia, but we can't tell in advance whether it's to be years or centuries. Obviously, once we're out centuries looking back, we can tell it's to be centuries given that Christianity is true.

What about the fulfillment and consummation of the eschatological prophecies? The Synoptics don't give a systematic presentation of eschatology; probably the book of Revelation would be the nearest, and you can see all the dispute over that as well. You basically have a situation of putting together puzzle pieces by looking at various shapes and colors on each piece and putting them together, but you don't have a full picture that allows you to know where all the pieces go.

Ridderbos sees several teachings which he says can be over-pressed to produce contradictions, but they're actually consistent. I think that, in fact, is a nice general principle as well. There are lots of things that the Bible says that if you over-press them, if you try to make them do more than what the writer intended—and I'm here thinking of God as a divine writer as well as humans writing—that you will get things that don't work right.

He suggests that these particular features show up, and if not over-pressed, are consistent. First of all, we're called to pay attention to signs [but] not to be deceived by false messiahs. The signs he suggests are that there's going to be: a beginning of sorrows; there's going to be the Abomination of Desolation; there's going to be the Great Tribulation and there are going to be cosmic catastrophes. So you need to pay attention to those and not run off in other directions.

The Abomination of Desolation, says Ridderbos, has both Jewish and universal elements. I agree that that's true. My suggestion is that this probably fits a Pre-millennial view better than it fits Ridderbos' Amillennial view. [My view is] that these things will be going on in Jerusalem because the Jews are back there, etc., which Amillennialists in the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries did not expect, though certainly some Pre-millennialists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century did expect. I have an article by Samuel Kellogg on fulfilled prophecy, and he definitely in the 1880s was expecting the return of Israel, and he wasn't going to predict when it would take place but saw that the biblical material pushed in that direction.

So pay attention to signs: the signs of beginning of sorrows, the Abomination of Desolation, Great Tribulation, and cosmic catastrophes. The Abomination of Desolation, as Ridderbos says, has both Jewish and universal elements. Some living at Jesus' time will witness his powerful manifestation as Son of Man before they die, including his enemies. I suggest that involves: 1) the disciples' visions at various times like we see in the book of Revelation; 2) he would say his enemies, well one, Paul, I think, on the road to Damascus; but two, the chief priests. These scared soldiers come running in, and what to do they do? They stonewall it; they've seen the signs, but they are going to keep being his enemies.

Another important point addressed to Jesus' followers: Don't give up praying for the coming of the kingdom, for God will speedily fulfill it in his time. Be watchful: no one knows when he will come, and don't forget the great task in the meantime—what are we here for?

Ridderbos' weakest section in his whole book seems to be this one on prophecy and history. He notes that prophecy lacks a time perspective and, that in fact is very similar to the dispensational mountain peaks of prophesy, and I agree with that. It's not set up so we can draw a chart and be quite sure that we have all the pieces in the right places. That doesn't mean we shouldn't make some attempts in that direction.

Ridderbos sees an interweaving of Jewish and universal elements, as in the fall of Jerusalem A.D. 70, first, and the end of the age, second. This interweaving he suggests is not to be solved by form criticism, nor as an interpretation after the fact as though the Gospel writers were all writing after 70 A.D. Rather, he says, that the prophet paints the future in colors known to him, including his own geographical horizon. He's poetic using figurative language rather than allegorical. I have no problem with that *per se*, but for much of eschatology we're going to have to wait and see what happens. So your particular view may require

you to interpret this way and that way, but you may be wrong. So we ought, even if we hold a particular view as being more likely than the others, to be ready to make adjustments, if it turns out that God has some surprises for us in that direction.

There are other themes in the Synoptics by which one could attempt to put together a picture of their theological teachings, but I believe Ridderbos has hit on a very important one in this phrase: “The coming of the Kingdom.”

So that’s a quick tour of the biblical theology of the Synoptics, and it picks up some idea of how it’s done, and some of the things that you can see there, and I think very valuable for that purpose. Well, we’ll see you again later when we look at the eleventh and twelve sections of our course.

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## Dr. Robert C. Newman, Synoptics, Lecture 13

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### Controversy Passages

Here we are again; we are looking at the Synoptic Gospels. We are just about to begin the eleventh unit of the twelve in this thirteenth lecture. We've looked so far at the historical Jesus, the Jewish background, the introduction to exegesis and the narrative genre, authorship and date, and also characteristics of the Synoptics, exegeting Jesus' parables, the Gospels as literary works, the Synoptic Problem, geography of Palestine and Jerusalem, exegeting miracle accounts, and biblical theology of the Synoptics. Now we want to look at exegesis of controversy accounts or perhaps more broadly, controversy and dialogue accounts.

A controversy passage may take the form either of narrative—Jesus responding in a dialogue fashion to opponents; or of a discourse—a report of Jesus' speech with some controversial topic. In either case there are certain things we need [to] think about in order to be sure we don't misunderstand what is happening, so I think these are some items to keep in mind. Our first item to keep in mind has to do with what one might think of as historical background. Jesus may not be addressing the particular controversy you are concerned about since his first concern is with the controversy going on at his own time. If you've heard anything about the new perspective on Paul, that basically turns on something of that sort: that Paul's writing were used heavily during the Reformation as the reformers tried to deal with the legalism of the Roman Catholic Church, and certain people connected with the new perspective have said that that is not the controversy that Paul had with the Judaizers at that particular time. Well, we're not going to jump into that particular topic, but that sort of thing does occur, and you need to try and get a good feel for what is going on at the time. So that, then,

is the item to keep in mind: you need to see what the controversy was at the time that we are talking about.

So what sort of things do you need to see? You need to try and figure out who were the opponents and where they coming from ideologically, theologically, practically, something of that sort. Then the next thing you try to figure out is what Jesus' view of the matter is. That might actually involve looking at other passages than our particular passage that you are interpreting, or preaching on, or teaching on. Here we need to be careful since Jesus' view of the matter might not be my view of the matter. After all, one of the purposes of Scripture is to correct where we are messed up in one way or another, and so that is what we kind of need to do. The purpose of Scripture is not looking around for verses you can use to lay on your opponents; it is for finding out what the Scripture is teaching, and you may have to lay that on yourself as well as on your opponents if you like.

A fifth matter to consider is how is Jesus arguing for his position? Here it helps to remember that Jesus' opponents do not accept his claims, [although] the disciples accept some of them and probably don't know what some of them are. Jesus' opponents are not about to take his word for it, so the question is: can we understand his words as arguing from where they are to where he is?

Sixth, something that comes up, I think a number of times when we are trying to understand a writing that is from a different culture than ours, is that in this case, Jesus may leave out some steps in an argument that may be easily understood by his original audience or opponents, but [it] does not follow that we will understand him unless we can supply those steps. I remember when I was working on my doctoral program at Cornell, that in journal articles the authors would say that from this equation it may be easily shown that this is so, and leave out a bunch of steps; and you need to try and work through and try and figure out what those are if you want to understand what the writer is saying. Well, when you are talking to somebody that already has the same background, you may not say

something like that, but that might still be true. So Jesus might leave out some steps, and we need to be careful and try and see if we can figure out those.

And lastly, once we understand what Jesus is saying to his original opponents and audience, we are then ready to see how this might carry over to us and to others living today. One way of picturing this is as though the perspective back in the ancient times is one horizon, and we are trying to take the perspective there and put it in our horizon, and do it in a fair way so that we are dealing with the biblical material in a satisfactory manner.

Well, as I've done for the miracles and the parables, I want to give a walkthrough of the controversy and dialogue accounts in the Synoptics. So this is a list of passages that more or less fall into the genre, and here one of them will be a controversy between John the Baptist and the Pharisees rather than between Jesus and his opponents; but the rest of them are with Jesus. So the incident, or pericope, first of all: John the Baptist is preaching in Matthew 3 and Luke 3. There he is dealing with the Pharisees and some of the others who are not repenting, basically, and so he is trying to get them to see the seriousness of the situation. Then there is the temptation of Jesus in Matthew 4 and Luke 4: temptation in the wilderness, where you've got a dialogue and also a controversy, if you like, between Jesus and Satan, showing how Satan was trying to turn Jesus aside.

The Sermon on the Mount, in at least that section in 5:17-47, is obviously some sort of controversy account. Jesus has just said that unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you'll never enter into heaven, if you like. Then he said, "You heard that it is said, but I say unto you..." It appears from thinking through those that we are working with how the Pharisees handle various Old Testament passages, or extend various Old Testament passages, and what Jesus is having to say regarding it: "Well, this is what they are really about, and this is what you need to do with them."

Moving on, there is the dialogue, controversy, if you like, regarding the man with leprosy in Matthew 8, Mark 1, and Luke 5; the cost of following Jesus in Matthew 8 and Luke 9; the healing of the paralytic in Matthew 9, Mark 2, and Luke 5--remember that is the one where they lower him down through the roof and then Jesus says, rather strikingly, to him, "Son, your sins are forgiven." The controversy then is at first—basically in the minds of the Pharisees—who can forgive sin but God alone?

The calling of Matthew is what we will probably call more dialogue, but in chapter 9 of Matthew and chapter 2 of Mark, and 5 of Luke, there is a question regarding fasting; [and] in the same three chapters: the dead girl and the sick woman in Matthew 9, Mark 5, and Luke 8. John the Baptist's question, "Are you the one that should come; are you the one who is to come, or are we to look for someone else?" In Matthew 11 and Luke 7 Jesus was Lord of the Sabbath.

In Matthew 12, Mark 2, and Luke 6, is one of the controversies—one of the Sabbath controversies: Jesus is going through the wheat fields, and his disciples [are] picking grain and rubbing it with their hands and eating the food, if you like, which Pharisees would have seen as reaping and winnowing and such.

Then there is the healing the fellow with the shriveled hand in Matthew 12, Mark 3, and Luke 6.

[Then] the Jesus and Beelzebul controversy, and that's one that we're going to come back and look at in some detail in Matthew 12, Mark 3, and Luke 11. Next is the sign of Jonah in Matthew 12 and Luke 11, and Jesus' mother and brothers in Matthew 12, Mark 3, and Luke 8. Then there are the controversies over clean and unclean in Matthew 15, and Mark 7; and the Canaanite woman who comes to Jesus in Matthew 15 and Mark 7. Next is the demand for a sign in Matthew 16, Mark 8; Peter's confession, Matthew 16, Mark 8, Luke 9. Jesus

predicts his death, Matthew 16, Mark 8, Luke 9, and then the demonized boy in Matthew 17, Mark 9, [and] Luke 9.

Then there's the temple tax question in Matthew 17, not to be confused with the render to Caesar passage later on. This one is the guys who go around collecting the half-shekel temple tax [and] ask if Jesus pays the temple tax; and Peter says, "Well, yeah, sure." Then when he comes back to Jesus, perhaps a few minutes or an hour or so later, Jesus beats him to the punch and says, "From whom do the kings of the earth collect taxes, from their own royal family or from others?" Peter knows the answer to that. The typical tax-exempt people in antiquity were people who were in the royal family, and the nobility, and that sort of thing. So he gives the right answer to that, and Jesus says, "So the sons are free." The implication then is that Jesus and his disciples don't need to pay the temple tax anymore, but then he says so that the people won't be offended, "You go out." Peter goes out and catches this fish, and it's got the right size coin in its mouth to pay for Jesus and Peter's temple tax.

Then there is the debate among the disciples, over who is the greatest; we don't actually hear the details of the debate, but Jesus' response to it is given in Matthew 18, Mark 9 and Luke 9. And then the whole matter of divorce which comes up in Matthew 19 [and] Mark 10 leading to a dialogue [with] the question about the little children coming to Jesus, Matthew 19, Mark 10, Luke 18; and [then] the rich young ruler coming to Jesus in Matthew 19, Mark 10, Luke 18.

There is the mother's request, that's James and John's mother's request, in Matthew 20, Mark 10; cleansing of the Temple in Matthew 21, Mark 11, Luke 19; Jesus' authority is questioned after that, and that's in Matthew 21, Mark 11, Luke 20. The paying taxes to Caesar [follows] which was mentioned a few minutes ago, Matthew 22, Mark 12, Luke 20.

Then the Sadducee's question about marriage and resurrection comes up in Matthew 22, Mark 12 and Luke 20 as well, then the scribes question about what's the greatest commandment, Matthew 22, Mark 12; and then Jesus' counter question: "Who is the Messiah?" They say, "Well, he's the Son of David," and then Jesus asked, "Why then does David call him Lord?" In the patriarchal society the ancestor doesn't call the descendent "Lord," so something else is going on is the implication; that's in Matthew 22, Mark 12, Luke 20. Then there is the anointing at Bethany, Matthew 26, Mark 14; Peter's denial predicted, Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22; the dialog at Gethsemane in Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22; Jesus' arrest in the same chapters; Jesus before the Sanhedrin, Matthew 26, Mark 14. Finally, "He that is not against us is for us" is found in Mark 9, and Luke 9. We've now finished the ones that are in Matthew and some of the Gospels. Then there are those that are offered just in Mark but not in Matthew.

The ones that are just in Luke are: Jesus at age twelve, Luke 2; Jesus' rejection at Nazareth, Luke 4; and the great catch of fish, Luke 5; Jesus anointed, Luke 7:36-50. He's anointed a couple of different times; this is the one where he's at Simon the Pharisees' house: this woman puts ointment on his feet, weeps on his feet, and then wipes his feet with her hair. There is a rather striking example of one of Jesus' arguments there.

In Luke alone there is: the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10; the incident with Mary and Martha, where Martha wants Mary to help out with preparations, is also Luke 10; Jesus' six woes in Luke 11; the parable of the Rich Fool in Luke 12; repent or perish, Luke 13; the man, crippled man in Luke 13; the Narrow Door, Luke 13; Herod the Fox, Luke 13; Jesus at the Pharisees' house, Luke 14; the Lost Sheep, Coin, and Son, Luke 15. Next there are: the Pharisees and money, Luke 16; ten lepers, Luke 17; Zachaeus, Luke 19; daughters of Jerusalem, Luke 23; two thieves, Luke 23; road to Emmaus Luke 24; and the appearance to the disciples in Luke 24.

If you were kind of thinking those over in your mind and we whipped through them, you noticed that some of them are miracles, some of them are parables, and some of them are something else. So some miracles involve a dialogue or a controversy. Jesus' miracles on the Sabbath invariably produce controversies, and Jesus' parables were often responses to some kind of controversies.

Well, we want to walk our way through and think through one of these in some detail, and that is the casting out demons by Beelzebul in Luke 11. We're going to start back in verse 14 and go down to 28. Luke tells us, "And he," that is Jesus, "was casting out a demon, and it was mute, and it happened when the demon had come out that the mute man spoke, and the crowd marveled." So we've got a kind of miracle account there, even with the crowd's response there.

But that's just kind of the introduction to verse 15: "But certain of them said, 'By Beelzebul the ruler of demons he casts out demons.' Others, testing him, began to seek [or were seeking] a sign from heaven from him. But he, by knowing their thoughts, said to them 'every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a house divided against a house falls. Now if indeed Satan is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand, for you are saying by Beelzebul I'm casting out demons. Now if I'm casting out demons by Beelzebul, by whom are your sons casting them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if by the finger of God I am casting out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Whenever a strong man, fully armed guards his own house-courtyard, his possessions are safe. But as soon as one stronger than he comes and conquers him, he takes away his armor in which he had trusted and he distributes his spoils [or distributes his weapons]. He who is not with me is against me, and he who is not gathering with me is scattering.

"When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he passes through waterless places seeking rest. Not finding any, he says 'I'll return to my house from which I departed.' He comes and finds it swept and ordered. Then he goes and brings seven other spirits worse than himself, and they come and dwell there; and the last circumstances of that man are worse than the first.

"Now it happened while he was saying these things that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to him, 'Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breast you sucked,' but he said, On the contrary: blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it.'"

Let's kind of walk through those verses and look at a couple things that have to do with the Greek, and then we'll come back and think about the passage as a whole.

In verse 15, "Certain of them said, 'By Beelzebul the ruler of demons he casts out demons.'" We look at the parallel passage in Matthew—they're described as Pharisees; and if we look at the parallel passage in Mark, they're described as scribes from Jerusalem, and that reminds us of something fairly important. If you're working through a passage, you should check and see whether it's got parallels, which in the Gospels that's not uncommon, and then read over those and make sure you don't do anything in your interpretation that contradicts one of the parallel passages. That's kind of a first order thing; one which, by the way, is not always observed by liberals because of their theories of what's going on with the history of it and things of that sort.

Verse 16, "Others, testing him, begin to seek a sign from heaven." That actually connects us out beyond our context to verse 29 where that comes up again, but we're not dealing with that here. Then he goes on and begins to respond to them in verse 19, "Now if I'm casting out demons by Beelzebul, by whom are you casting them out?"

This is a good example of an “if construction,” which in some of your older grammars was called a “true to fact if,” but in more recent years the grammarians have seen that those are, in fact, what we may call “logical ifs.” That is, if this is true, then this is what follows from it; but I'm not granting that this is true. Jesus is obviously not granting that he's casting out demons by Beelzebul.

“Whenever a strong man fully armed” is a way of translating the beginning of verse 21, but it actually has a definite article in front of “strong man,” and some people have wondered and thought in terms of Jesus' hinting that this is he, etc. But that's just the generic use of a definite article, and yes indeed, when you look at how the parable sets up, Jesus is representing himself as the strong man, but not from that hint in the Greek there.

What else is going on here of note in the Greek? There is a pluperfect that shows up in verse 22 which [is] “he had trusted,” which is pretty rare in our New Testament Greek.

Then we get the generic use the definite article down with the unclean spirit in verse 24, which I translate “an unclean spirit.” That pretty well takes care of the notable Greek things, I guess, going on in our passage.

The next thing I took a look here is at the elements of narrative in this particular incident. This is a narrative with an implied dialogue. Well, you actually do have the Pharisees saying he's casting out demons by Beelzebul, and actually Jesus responds to that, [and that] is what's going on in most of this [discussion]. Then you have this woman at the end [saying], “Blessed is the womb that bore you,” and then Jesus responds to that, and there's one [instance of] seeking the sign up earlier, and he will pick that up just past our passage. So we're looking at a kind of a complicated dialogue here when, in fact, you're addressing a crowd, [and] you can have various people say something from the crowd.

But it's also a narrative. So what are the elements in the narrative here, [i.e.] actors or characters? Well, there's Jesus. There are the unnamed opponents, which are described further for us in Matthew and Mark as scribes and Pharisees. There are some others who are not identified for us, and then there's this woman.

Then there are some actions. Jesus heals a mute who is demonized. The opponents claim he is working by Beelzebul—we may come back and think about who Beelzebul is. Others are seeking a heavenly sign.” Jesus responds to those claiming he's working by satanic powers, [but] a woman interrupts by blessing his mother and Jesus responds to her. Then, just out of where we stopped our passage, Jesus responds to those seeking a sign. Scenes [are] not specified, but presumably this is all one scene in that sense. He's speaking to them under some circumstances. The plot, well, the various responses to Jesus are dealt with by him—that's the main plot, you might say.

So the opposition to Jesus attempts to discredit Jesus perhaps are answered, and perhaps we could say with the woman's remark that a distraction is refocused, perhaps. We do have two or three examples where somebody says something to Jesus, and it's a distraction in some sense. It carries them away from what's going on, trying to carry the audience away from what's going on.

Remember the guy who wanted Jesus to arbitrate in a dispute with his brother over dividing the inheritance and Jesus does respond to it? But in some sense it's a distraction.

So the controversy and its background: Who is Beelzebul? These, by the way, were questions I put on a study sheet for my students to think through on their own and then to discuss in class. Who's Beelzebul? What are Jesus' opponents saying when they accuse him of casting out demons by Beelzebul? Well, our narrative itself identifies Beelzebul as the ruler of demons. That doesn't automatically make him Satan because Satan may have some, as C.S. Lewis calls

it, “lowerarchy” under him. So this guy might be someone else there. The name comes from Baal the standard word for “lord” and which became a name for a god, yet probably a god with different locations rather than seen as different gods. And so specifically the god Baal here combined with *zebul*, and that has various possible meanings, and even has over the centuries also been ended with a “b” instead of an “l.” So you have “Beelzebub,” as well as “Beelzebul.” The various meanings “filth,” “lord of filth,” obviously is not complimentary, “lord prince,” “lord of the dwelling,” etc. Whether Beelzebul is to be understood as a synonym for Satan, or as a name of one of his underlings who is over the demons, is really not clear; that’s a trickier question. We certainly do have warrant from the Old Testament and from remarks of Paul in the New Testament that satanic and demonic powers lie behind false religions of various sorts that we can see. What is clear is that the opponents are charging Jesus with using satanic power, probably because this is what they believe, but also to discredit him with the crowd.

If you try and back up and look at this with the perspective of the Pharisees who have moved into opposition, or the scribes who are in the same kind of category, they’ve got the problem that Jesus is doing miracles that no one has been doing for some centuries. In fact, there is a huge problem, if you think about it, that when you analyze Jesus’ miracles that they’re in the same ballpark with Moses and Elijah and Elisha and such. So what are you going to do about that? Well, that kind of background is going to be rather important in regard to Jesus’ answer. So what they have to really do is—if they’re not going to admit that Jesus is who he claims to be—they’re going to have to assign him having demonic powers.

We have some of that same situation going on, say, a generation ago when non-charismatics were responding to charismatics and such. Perhaps it’s blown over to a certain extent now, though non-charismatics are still suspicious when

miracles are done and, of course, are rightly, I think, trying to examine them against Scripture, and see whether that's fair or not.

So what's the controversy that Jesus is addressing? Well that's really pretty straightforward. The question is what is the real source of Jesus power? Who are his opponents here? Where are they coming from? Well as it's been pointed out a couple of times, the opponents are not specified in Luke; but Matthew 12:24 identifies them as Pharisees, and Mark 3:22 as teachers of the law who had come down from Jerusalem. They cannot deny that Jesus is doing miraculous works, but since they're unwilling to accept these as from God, then they must be from Satan.

So the question here in this passage is how is Jesus arguing for his position? Can you spot any places where Jesus might be leaving out some steps in his argument because his opponents or the audience might not need them? Well, I went through then verses 17-26, and that's basically what I urged my students to do and try to see if they can divide that up into distinct arguments. It doesn't hurt them to dig out the verses and look at them again.

It looks like 17 and 18 are some kind of an argument from a divided kingdom: "He knowing their thoughts said, 'Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a house divided against itself falls. Now indeed, if Satan is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand?'" And then an explanatory note, "Because you are saying by Beelzebul I'm casting out demons." He perhaps says that at the end because, perhaps, some of the people in the crowd don't hear what the opponents are saying.

Then verse 19 seems to be a slightly different argument. Obviously, these are linked together in some way, and I've labeled it "You're Exorcists." "Now, if I'm casting out demons by Beelzebul, by whom are your sons casting them out?" And "sons" here might be "disciples," etc. And it's probably fair to say the Pharisees had exorcists of one sort or another. Josephus makes reference to

exorcism taking place. His example actually connects it with Essenes, but it wouldn't be unreasonable that the Pharisees also had something of a sort.

And then verse 20: I have "Kingdom Come" here as my label for the argument. Jesus says, "But if by the finger of God I'm casting out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." So he is arguing, "If I'm miraculously casting out demons, that says something about the coming of the kingdom." That carries us back into the discussion of biblical theology, the Synoptic there, just last time where this would be one of the evidences that the kingdom has come, if you like.

Then verse 21 and 22 I label "Strong and Stronger," whenever a strong man fully armed guards his own courtyard, his possessions are safe; but as soon as one stronger than he comes and conquers him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and distributes his spoils, his property (or his weapons) which he's been using to defend himself."

Verse 23 I take to be another argument: "No Neutrality." "He who is not with me is against me, and he who is not gathering with me is scattering." Then we get a somewhat puzzling section in verses 24 through 26, which I call: "The Spirit's House": "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he passes through waterless places seeking rest; not finding any, he says, 'I'll return to my house from which I departed.' When he comes and finds it swept and ordered, then he goes and he brings seven other spirits worse than himself. They come in and dwell there, and the last circumstance in this man are worse than the first."

All of these respond to the opponents' tactic of explaining away Jesus' miracle as satanic. They appear to argue something like this (we're filling in steps if you like): Verses 17 and 18, "Divided Kingdom"; "In view of Satan's warfare with God," that would be the pharisaic view of the matter as well as Jesus' view of the matter. Can Satan afford to divide his forces in the face of God? When you

look through battles in ancient history and in modern history, etc., often a clever tactician will divide his forces and bring one around, and that often works; but it works because the opposing general doesn't know what's happening.

Now try and bring that into the spiritual realm. Satan is going to try and divide his forces because God doesn't know it is happening? This is not going to work. So can Satan afford to do that? After all, God is not a human general from whom troop movements might be hidden, or one who might be out-witted. Isn't Satan taking a real chance that God will intervene to destroy him? Satan does not know the future well enough to know that he may not be defeated in a particular thing if he doesn't do the right, the "safe" thing: the thing that will work to his advantage.

Verse 19, "You're Exorcists," goes something like this: "On what basis can you make a distinction between my exorcisms and those of your pharisaic exorcists? Are yours more powerful? Are they more efficient? And if they're not, and you guys are working from God, and you guys are not as powerful or as efficient, etc., that argument isn't going to run too well." Then in verse 20, "If by the finger of God I'm casting out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." It looks like Jesus' use of the phrase "Finger of God" is intended to recall Exodus 8:19 where the Egyptian magicians, in competing with Moses, finally when God guides Moses to bring the gnats in, the magicians can't match it; and so they say this power comes from God; this is God's power. But if Jesus's miracles come from God, you then have to face the fact that in him God's kingdom has come, and you then have to respond on that basis rather than trying to dismiss it as satanic.

Verses 21 and 22, "Strong and Stronger" argument looks like this: in fact, Jesus's power to cast out demons shows, like the defeat of an armed warrior and

another by the plundering of his property, Jesus has defeated and plundered Satan. He has taken away Satan's captives and set them free, if you like.

Verse 23, "No Neutrality": there was no neutrality in this war: you are either on God's side or you're on Satan's side; if you are not for me then you are against me; if you are not cooperating with me, then you are working against me.

Now verses 24 and 26 are puzzling in several ways. Verses 24 and 26 are some kind of a narrative: "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man and passes through water for a place seeking rest, not finding any he says, 'I will return to my house,' and comes to find it is swept and ordered; he brings with him seven other spirits worse than himself, and they come and dwell there," etc. It appears to be a parable; the picture of what happens to a man who has been delivered from demon possession.

As it happens a couple other places in Scripture, the person is pictured as a house in some sense, and the demons as people living in the house. We have a picture that is a little bit that way where Paul pictures our current body as a tent and the resurrection body as a house; and we, as presumably the souls, dwell in it, if you like. So, we've got something like that here. And basically this parable seems to picture what happens to a man who's been delivered from demon possession. If there is no power placed within him to resist [the] demonic, they return. So that's what seems to be going on.

I am guessing that it's a parable, but Jesus doesn't always tell us when he is speaking in parables. The comparison then seems to be that if Israel or if the people he is speaking to individually reject Jesus after all this miraculous power has been displayed, then they would be overwhelmed when the demonic forces return. That would be my read of that. That's a little tricky on what to make of that, but that's the direction I would suggest going with this particular response. So, it's a kind of a warning then at the end of these remarks.

Does the remark by the woman and Jesus's response in verses 27 and 28 fit in to this? Or is it a new pericope or a new incident? I am not sure whether this is a new incident or not; it's very short if it is. Besides, verse 16, "Others Seeking a Sign," seems to connect with verse 29 after the passage we are discussing: "That is a wicked generation that seeks for a sign." So I think, of course, it's probably not. Maybe our idea of dividing everything into pericopes is a little artificial in places, so that might be a problem there. If this is the last or next to the last item in this pericope, its connection to the rest may not be physical birth. It maybe that not physical birth, but obedience is what counts, and that a proper relation to God is an even greater blessing than bearing the Messiah. You say, "How would that come up?" Well, a woman brought it up, and so from Jesus' perspective, during his time of humiliation, his time of conception to his resurrection or ascension if you like, he does not make use of his divine powers all the time. He is surprised by things various times. So, this may be a surprise that the woman throws in, and yet Jesus responds well to it, if you like. Again, it would continue to be a warning that here are these people who think they are safe because they are Israel. As this happened a couple other times in salvation history, but rejecting the Messiah is really going to muck things up. And so it is a correct response to God—not being close to the Messiah, even to be his mother [that counts]. This is not a great passage for Roman Catholic Mariology, as a matter of fact, but that's not what it's primarily about.

So that is my reading there. I think that obedience rather than physical birth is what counts: how you respond to Jesus rather than how you are related to him in a physical sense, and that proper relation to God is an even greater blessing than bearing the Messiah.

The last question I asked on my study sheet was: What implications do you see in this response of Jesus to the various controversies which you might encounter today? Well, let's see; we might summarize the arguments in verses 17-

22, and I will go back here to pull those out for you. They would be: “Divided kingdom,” “Your Exorcists,” “Kingdom Come,” and “Strong and Stronger.” How would you handle those? We might summarize the arguments in verses 17-22 as pointing to our responsibility to use sound judgment rather than using partiality for our particular group for what we are in, or special pleading, and to deal fairly with the evidence God provides rather than letting our presuppositions control us. That is good advice for any age. The Jews of Jesus’ time were faced with a rather difficult situation! Jesus wasn’t exactly what they were expecting in the direction of the Messiah. On top of that, he went against some of the theological views that the Sadducees held, some theological views that the Pharisees held, and people who belonged to those groups who were seriously trying to follow God had to deal with that matter and try and rethink their position. That might happen to us in our own Christian life. If something we held turns out to be wrong, that perhaps we thought we were interpreting the Bible but we weren’t properly doing so, that sometimes shows up. We are not infallible. So we need to deal fairly with the evidence that God provides rather than letting our presuppositions control us.

Verse 23 reminds us that finally there is no neutrality when it comes down to what we will do with Jesus, not back then and not today.

Verses 24-26 suggests that the blessings we have cannot last without our being in proper relationship with God, and as we can see from other passages then, even if we don’t seem to be getting any blessings at the moment, if we are clinging to God, trying to do the right thing, a blessing will come one day. We just need to be ready to wait for it.

Verses 27-28 indicate that there is no greater blessing than knowing and loving God. So with that, we will stop.

Any of these passages you could get more profit from with further work on them, but basically, as I tell my students in a course like this, you are typically

going to be preparing a Bible study or a sermon; you are not writing a dissertation, and so you need to spend what will be a reasonable time along with your other duties to try and understand the passage better. That is kind of what we are doing here.

So, that is enough for today, and we will see you, Lord willing, at our next session.

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## Dr. Robert C. Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Lecture 14

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### Form Criticism

#### Introduction to Lecture

Well, good morning. We have come to our last session here in the Synoptic Gospel course. We have looked so far at the historical Jesus, the Jewish background, introduction to exegesis and the narrative genre, authorship and date, characteristics of the Synoptics, exegeting parables, the Gospels as literary works, the Synoptic Problem, the geography of Palestine and Jerusalem, exegeting the miracle accounts, the theology of the Synoptics, exegeting controversy accounts. Now we want to look at form criticism and redaction criticism. We'll also want to finish up with some conclusions on gospel history.

#### Form Criticism Introduction

Well, we think a little about the terminology of form criticism. What is the word form criticism about? It's a rough English translation of two German terms: *formgeschichte*, "form history," or *Gattungschungen*, "genre research."

Form criticism is a method of analyzing materials that have been orally transmitted in an attempt to recover the original versions on the assumption that the literary forms can be identified and restored to their primitive conditions. We are going to clarify this in a little bit here.

The idea is that stories or sayings circulate orally and, as they do that, their content and complexity change in predictable ways. It is somewhat like the stories about the fish that got away. It always seems to get bigger as the story is repeated

over and over. Well, the application of form criticism to the New Testament began with Rudolf Bultmann just after World War One. What we want to do first of all is look at the background of form criticism and come back and begin to describe it specifically.

### Background to Form Criticism

This approach of form criticism did not suddenly appear with Rudolf Bultmann, but has a lengthy background in biblical studies. Several strands of liberal thought were united in form criticism. First of all is F.C. Bauer's reconstruction of church history. Bauer was a German Church History professor in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, mid-1800s. Bauer adopted Hegel's philosophy of history and applied it to church history.

At this time Hegel's philosophy of history as the conflict of ideas was very influential in Europe. He saw all history as a conflict between a new idea, which he called "the thesis," which spawned a counter idea, "the antithesis." Their conflict lead eventually to some compromise idea which he called "the synthesis." So thesis conflicted with the antithesis leading to the synthesis.

Most people are more familiar with how Karl Marx applied this idea to the struggle between social classes. Bauer was the first to apply these ideas to early church history. He saw a struggle between two groups in the early church characterized as follows: on the one hand, the Jewish church, on the other hand, the Gentile church. Peter's the leader of the Jewish church was and Paul's the leader of the Gentile church. The Jewish church made up mostly [of] Jews and the Gentile church mostly of Hellenistic Gentiles. The Jewish church saw Jesus as a

great miracle working man and Messiah; the Gentile church saw Jesus as God in a new mystery religion.

### Six Elements of Form Criticism

The Jewish church had an emphasis on the law, the Gentile church an emphasis on the sacraments. The Jewish church had an emphasis on national salvation, the salvation of Israel; the Gentile on individual salvation. Bultmann later in the twentieth century uses Bauer's ideas of two separate early Jewish and Gentile churches to date the sources that he claims to find in the Gospel material. So that's the first element, if you like, that will be used by Bultmann in his form criticism.

The second was David Fredrick Strauss's mythical approach. Strauss, you remember, wrote the *Leben Jesu* back in the 1835, and he said that much of the gospel was mythical, especially the miraculous. The Gospels, he thought, are propaganda pieces which teach religious truths but the events they narrate did not really happen. Form critics, especially Bultmann, follow Strauss in seeing much in the Gospels as myth also.

Then we have as a third element: Bernard Weiss and H. J. Holtzmann's documentary theory. When we talked about Synoptic Problem, we mentioned the two document theory that was popularized by Weiss and Holtzmann, although Eichhorn proposed it earlier. Here Mark and Q are the sources used by Matthew and Luke. Form criticism sees Mark and Q as literary sources behind the gospel, but then tries to get back behind Mark and Q to the original primitive oral materials.

A fourth element is old liberal arguments over the character of Jesus. As we had said earlier, with miracles removed from the Gospels, we have conflicting pictures of Jesus. Some see him as a moral teacher, others a revolutionary leader,

or a prophet of eschatological doom or a charlatan. Which parts of the gospel material are selected or rejected effects which type of Jesus these various different guys see. Bultmann and others hope that form criticism can clarify the picture and get back to the real historical Jesus.

A fifth element behind form criticism is Wrede and Wellhausen skepticism. They propose that even Mark and Q were theological constructs derived from the interpretation of the early church. If that's true, then we have to dissolve the framework of these narratives and look at the isolated basic sayings.

This is what form criticism does, but form criticism got started first in the Old Testament, so that is the sixth element and this brings us to Herman Gunkel. He distinguished small elements in Genesis and in the Psalms which he claimed had once circulated orally before being written down. The units in Genesis, he said, contained legends designed to describe the origin of names [of] either people or places. Wherefore, the units of the Psalms were worship liturgical materials prepared for specific occasions or specific shrines. Gunkel tried to reconstruct the life situation, which comes to be known in German as *sitz im leben* in which these stories or psalms originated. Well, Bultmann then tries to do the same for the units he finds in the Synoptic Gospels.

That brings us finally to form criticism in the New Testament. After World War I Bultmann applied Gunkel's method to the Gospels, that is, to the pieces isolated from the framework of Mark and Q as suggested by Wrede and Wellhausen. Bultmann claimed his method, form criticism, could distinguish earlier material from later material, could distinguish Gentile from Jewish sources, and could thus determine which materials really went back to Jesus. Bultmann's methods had been refined since his time. They find most avid practitioners among the members in the Jesus Seminar mentioned back in our discussion of the historical Jesus. So that much then becomes the background to form criticism.

## Methods of Form Criticism

The first question to ask is: What is a form? Well, to understand form criticism we start with the basics. There are all sorts of things that are called “forms,” and a number of these have some relation to our concern here. A form is a sort of mold which gives shape to some medium. For instance, we have concrete forms made for pouring concrete into to make sidewalks, and gutters, and things of that sort. We have Jell-O molds for making Jell-O salads, and some other things of that sort. We might call these physical forms.

By analogy then, we also have language forms, and language forms also give a shape to some medium, but the medium here is language. These forms hold certain words fixed, which are then the form, and vary other words which we might think are the contents we pour into the form. So that makes these forms useful for a variety of applications. We still think about this in rather common use when we talk about filling out a form. So we’ve got an application form. It’s set up for an application for a job, or for college, or something, and it’s got certain forms with things fixed: name, address, etc., and what those are depend on what kind of a form it is.

Some examples that perhaps are not form so much: a polite introduction is a form. You have kind of a space for a person's name, and then, “I would like you to meet,” and then you would put another person’s name in there. So that tells you politely how you go about introducing somebody.

A sermon is also, if you like, a literary form, or a verbal form. It could have somewhat different shapes, if you like, depending on whether it’s a textual sermon, a topical sermon, or an expository sermon. The classical sermon form consists of an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. And the body especially for a classical sermon should make three points and should be sprinkled with

illustrations and exhortations. The conclusion might well end in a poem, or a prayer, or an altar call depending on the particular Christian denominational background in which the sermon is being given.

A good test for recognizing the form is: “Can it be mimicked or parodied?” For instance, there is a textural sermon on “Mary Had a Little Lamb,” which I’ve heard on a few occasions as an example of that sort of thing. We also get legal or financial forms; a check, for instance. If you pull out your check book and look at it, it’s got fixed words and a lot of blanks. It’s basically a little short memo, or letter, to your bank, and it’s dated so that the bank can see whether it’s been around a long time or not. It tells whom you pay the check to and how much, and it’s got two places for that to keep the recipient needing the check from sticking in some extra numbers to make it a bigger amount. Then it’s got your signature; and recent checks have the name of the bank and all sorts of routing numbers down at the bottom, and things of that sort as well.

A deed, or a will, would also be examples of legal forms. In English we have literary forms. In poetry, a sonnet, for instance, is fixed as being fourteen lines, and it’s supposed to be in a particular meter called “Iambic Pentameter.” And its lyric is about some topic like love, or the beauty of nature, or something of that sort, and often has a fixed rhyme scheme. So here’s a Christian sonnet by Frances Ridley Havergal, a fairly well known hymn writer from the nineteenth century.

Love culminates in bliss, when it doth reach  
 A white, flickering, fear-consuming glow;  
 And, knowing it is known as it doth know,  
 Needs no assuring word or soothing speech.

It craves but silent nearness, so to rest,  
 No sound, no movement, love not heard but felt,  
 Longer and longer still, till time should melt.  
 A snowflake on the eternal ocean's breast,  
 Have moments of this silence starred thy past?  
 Made memory a glory-haunted place,  
 Taught all the joy that mortal ken can trace?  
 By greater light 'tis but a shadow cast:  
 So shall the Lord thy God rejoice o'er thee.  
 And in His love will rest, and silent be.

Well, on the other end of the spectrum, we have limericks: a five-line humorous poem, three lines for second fifth, have three feet to their meter, and they rhyme. And two lines, a third and a fourth, are shorter, two feet, and they rhyme. And the fifth line is the punch line.

There was a young lady named Bright,  
 Who traveled much faster than light.  
 She set out one day  
 In a relative way,  
 And returned on the previous night."

One of my students wrote this limerick:

There was a professor named Newman,  
 Who was known for his wit and acumen.  
 He gave out a test,  
 But everyone guessed,  
 So he flunked them without even fuming.”

This was by John Bloom, one of my former students.

Well, those are examples of literary forms if you like.

### Bultmann's Assumptions of Form Criticism in the New Testament

Let's take a look at the assertions that Bultmann and the form critics make. They say there are forms in written and oral literature. So what does Bultmann claim we can do with them? Here are the typical assertions of Bultmann -type form critics: Some form critics are more conservative than he is, but he has had by far the greatest influence in New Testament studies. So Bultmann and others of that sort assert: One, there was a period of oral tradition before the Gospels were written. And most people would agree that something oral was around for a while. Bultmann argues for two generations of oral transmission from Christ to, perhaps, 70 to 100 AD.

Secondly, during that time of oral transmission, gospel sayings and

narratives circulated as independent units.

And then, thirdly, these units may be classified by their form into groups. Typically, three groups, [but] some will have more, and you can subdivide the groups. One of these groups is a saying—an isolated statement of Jesus—with no narrative supporting it. Another is a saying story, a proverb, or sharp saying with a story around it that helps you understand the point of it. And thirdly, a miracle story: a narrative of a miraculous event.

Fourthly, Bultmann and others claim that the early church not only preserved but also invented many of these units to fill practical needs. So by knowing the emphasis of each unit, we can determine its source and show that many of these do not go back to Jesus. So one of these is that the Palestinian, or Jewish, church saw Jesus as its Messiah and expected his return as the Son of Man. So that kind of material would point to a Jewish church background. The Hellenistic, Gentile church, on the other hand, saw Jesus as a cult lord, or deity, of their new mystery religion and emphasized their present communion with the Holy Spirit. So the early church preserved and invented many of these.

Fifth, these materials have little or no real biographical, chronological, or geographical value. On the extent to which they've got those, it is not really, what should we say, authentic. So what do they tell you in these areas? This was added later in the oral tradition, or made up by Mark to fit his framework or such. Bultmann would point out that this tendency is seen in folklore. So it is as we think [of] stories about George Washington that are embellished with unhistorical details, like his throwing a dollar across the Potomac River or something of that sort. Note the implication here, that the early church was sloppy with the truth and used their stories for propaganda purposes.

Sixth, the original version of each tradition unit may be recovered and its oral history traced by using the laws which governed tradition. Well, what are these laws? They're derived from observing how stories develop. For instance, the traditions in Greek and Jewish literature. The *Letter of Aristeas*, for instance,

traces the origin of the translation of the Old Testament, and as you hear the story of the origin of the Septuagint in later writers, it tends to get embellished in many ways as reported by the church fathers or others. Or you can see how it develops in parables in Jewish literature where you often see several versions of the same parable in the different literature or the apocryphal gospels as they borrow from the canonical Gospels; or the canonical Gospels, Matthew and Luke, as they borrow from Mark and Q. So these would be the places that Bultmann and others would use to try and defend their laws of how tradition changes the content of various oral statements.

### Procedures of Form Criticism

That's kind of the assumptions of form criticism; now we look a little bit at their procedure. Using these assertions, form critics process each unit to get to its most primitive form. Then they try to decide whether that unit goes back to Jesus or not. So their first step is to isolate the stories and sayings from the context, which is assumed to be a purely editorial invention. So they assume that Matthew and Luke both use Mark, and so they then basically try and take out these anecdotes, if you like, or these sayings. If necessary, they shave them down some to get back to the original form. To do this they use the laws of tradition to recover the original primitive state of each story or saying. And for that, a primitive narrative is said to be characterized by a single scene, a short time period, only two or three characters, and any groups who are present act as a unit. In fact, we do often see these things; they are features of storytelling. And whether those stories are historical stories or not, to convey something in an understandable, interesting way, those are common features, if you like.

A development in a narrative then involves, according to Bultmann and

others, increasing elaboration and making details more explicit: adding names where none were originally, converting indirect discourse into direct discourse, and adding miraculous elements. So basically these are applied to try and get back to the most primitive form for each saying, saying story, or miracle story.

Then, thirdly, you try to decide which early group was responsible for this primitive form. Possibilities are the early church, Jewish or Gentile, the Jews, or Jesus. Just like we said before: Martin Luther came out of the Catholic Church and started Lutheranism; so Jesus comes out of Judaism and starts Christianity. So these other possible groups are all considered candidates.

What kind of criteria would be used to try and decide whether they go back to Jesus or not? One of them is multiple attestation: If a form appears in both Mark and Q, then it's more likely to go back to Jesus. Dissonance: Jesus actually said those things which we cannot imagine any other early source would say, for instance, paying taxes to Caesar. The Jews didn't like paying taxes, Christians didn't like paying taxes, so it must go back to Jesus.

Well, that's basically what we've got here.

### Miracle Stories as a Basic Form

Well, we look at some samples then of the application of form criticism. First of all, we'll go back and talk a little bit about these basic forms that we've identified.

Typically there are three basic forms identifying the Gospel material, though some critics have more. Notice the category of sayings has numerous sub-varieties. In Miracle Stories form critics find the following structure to miracle stories. The problem is described: some sickness or person danger or a necessity,

something of that sort; a danger: the boat's about to sink; and necessity: these people are out here in the wilderness and they might not even make it back to towns before their blood sugar gets too low.

[Finally,] the problem solved by the actions of the healer, or whatever, and Bultmann does remark that the actions of Jesus as a healer are very reserved compared with some of the actions of the healers in Josephus, or Rabbinic materials, or magical popery, or apocryphal gospels, or things of that sort. Then the effect of the miracle is stated: the person healed, his reaction, her reaction, other reactions, the crowd, the reactions of the demon and things of that sort.

We'll walk through a couple of examples here just to give you a little feeling. Mark 1:23-27 is about the demon possessed man in the synagogue. There's some contextual connection at the beginning of the story, and critics say, "Well, that's the work of the editor. That's the way he connects this anecdote into the narrative so that you throw that out." Then you've got the problem: the man is possessed by a demon. You've got the solution: Jesus speaks and heals the man. Bultmann notes, as I said, that in comparison with the Apocrypha in the Greek miracle stories, there's greater simplicity in Jesus' healings. No magic words or ritual, though occasionally they point to [the word] *ephphahtah* as being some sort of a magic word, although it's just basically Aramaic for "open." Admittedly, some of the demon exorcisms that you see elsewhere—I think of the one in Josephus, where Josephus tells us about, I think it was an Essene, that had a ring with some herbs inside it that were specified in one of Solomon's magical books. He takes the ring, and he holds it up to the nose of the fellow, and he pulls it. And the demon comes out, and the demon overturns a wash basin of water over here so that you know that he's come out, etc. Well, the effect in this particular one we're looking at, the man possessed by the demon, Jesus speaks and heals the man. Then you have the reaction of the crowd, the demon, and the healed person in this particular case.

Or in Mark 4:35-41; Jesus is rebuking the wind and the waves. Context: “On that day,” throw it out. Problem: the boat is sinking, and you’ve got high winds. A solution: Jesus rebukes the wind, rather reserved action, and effects calm. The disciples are amazed. Both of these examples fit Bultmann’s primitive miracle story form: single scene, few actors, crowd acting as a unit, etc.

Well, miracle stories actually do have this basic form. I think we see that already when we talked about miracle accounts back in our exegesis of miracle accounts, and when we looked at Leland Ryken’s characterization of a bunch of different kinds of narratives in the Synoptic Gospels. They do have this basic form, but that does not mean you can call them primitive or developed. It’s a natural way to narrate something of this sort and would apply to any problem, solution, or anecdote, if you like.

### Saying Stories as a Basic Form

A “Saying Story” is a narrative with a saying as its central feature. The narrative is constructed to illuminate the meaning or impact of the saying. Some general characteristics of New Testament saying stories: some of these suitably modified would also apply to secular and modern forms as well. First, the emphasis is on the saying of Jesus, or one approved by him. In the rabbinic literature, the emphasis is on something that Hillel said, or something Shammai said, or Akiba said, something like that. The brief, simple narrative is just sufficient to make the saying comprehensible. It’ll often have somebody that tells some story and then says, “You had to be there.” In other words, he didn’t tell the story very well is basically what that means. If you tell it well, the person will catch the point. Then, thirdly, the story contains some biographical interest, but Bultmann would say this is only biographical interest regarding what people

thought Jesus was like. Bultmann claims that these don't have any real historical value as they're not accurate.

The post-Bultmannians, we saw earlier, disagree with this, saying that if there's multiple attestation, and dissonance and such, then biographical features may go back to the historical Jesus and have some value. And lastly, the story is rounded off, by a saying or an act of Jesus. Sometimes the saying is back in the middle in the act, like Jesus healed the guy or something, [or] is at the end, but more frequently rounded off by the saying. This function is to get in and out of the story nicely. It usually ends with the saying itself, or with an act of Jesus. One of the things you notice when you listen to people who are not skilled or experienced storytellers is they have a hard time stopping. They don't know how to get out of the story they're telling in a satisfactory way.

Well, let's look at some examples of saying stories. Mark 3:2-6 is "The Man with the Withered Hand Healed." This is not primitive, as we see a combination of miracle and saying stories here, but since the emphasis is on the saying, the miracle is the scene which illuminates the saying. It needs some simplification to be a primitive form according to form criticism. Context: the Pharisees are watching Jesus. The question: he's got this fellow there with a withered hand, will Jesus heal? The response: Jesus says "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" And Jesus' healing miracle answers the question. Biographical interest: Jesus' anger and Jesus' concern for the sick man. Rounding off: either the healing itself or when the Pharisees leave rather angry.

Another example of a saying story is Mark 2:23-28, "Picking Grain on the Sabbath." Here, Jesus answers their question with a question. And he rounds off the story with, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." Biographical interest: Jesus' compassion for his disciples, etc. We have many cases where Jesus responds with a parable. Question: who is my neighbor?

Answer: parable of Good Samaritan, etc. The first of these categories then is called Jewish saying stories, and these are similar to those in rabbinic literature. Somebody, an enemy, king, disciple, person, or crowd, asked the rabbi a question, and the rabbi's characteristic answer is a parable or another question. Naturally, this type would be older, but not necessarily from Jesus, and those are two examples we gave you: "The Man with the Withered Hand" and "Picking Grain on the Sabbath," both fall into that category.

But Bultmann also sees Greek saying stories, and this is a much less definite form. The form is basically introduced by stereotyped formula. When he, the Greek philosopher, or teacher, or something was asked by someone about something he [the philosopher] said. There's no real story or background with it; this is the way anecdotes of various Greek philosophers were typically preserved.

Well there is one classic New Testament example of this in Luke 17:20-21, which uses this formula above. In the NASB, "Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the Kingdom of God was coming, he answered them and said, 'The Kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, nor will they say, "Look! Here it is," or "There it is!" For behold, the Kingdom of God is in your midst.'"

As the Greeks hearing these stories are obviously later editions showing a Greek influence, Bultmann throws them out. According to Bultmann, Jewish saying stories may have Jesus, or the early Jewish church, or the pre-Christian Jews as sources, but Greek saying stories have the Gentile church as their source. So that's the second category. First, miracle stories; second, saying stories; third, sayings or we may say, "isolated sayings," which are sayings that originally had no story with them as the saying stories did. Some of these may now be grouped together to form sermons. Others may be part of a saying story now, but their original form was isolated; and some of them are still isolated here. How do we know if a sermon or story is the editor's invention? Why remove the story in one

case and not in another? Form critics say: if the saying makes no sense without the story, then it's a saying story not a simple saying. But if it makes sense without it, it may have been originally just a simple saying.

### Types of Sayings

Bultmann finds five kinds of sayings in the Gospels. Proverbs, which Bultmann calls "logia", but the term that has been fastened upon by form critics and is more understandable to the average person is "proverbs." These are like the proverbs in the Old Testament book of Proverbs, or somewhat like Benjamin Franklin's proverbs in *Poor Richard's Almanac*. A short, pithy saying of some sort. "The first shall be last, and the last, first." Or "Physician, heal yourself."

A second category is Prophetic or Apocalyptic Sayings. These are sayings about the future, especially about the end of the age. "Not one stone will be left upon another." "Two will be grinding in a mill; one will be taken, and one left," and so on.

A third category is Law Words, or Commandments. These are sayings structured as commands or imperatives: "Turn the other cheek," or "Go the extra mile."

A fourth category is "I" words, where Jesus uses "I" in the saying where he's referring to himself. These focus on the person and authority of Jesus. "You have heard it has been said ... but I say unto you," et cetera, would be examples from the Sermon on the Mount.

And lastly, Parables, which are metaphorical sayings often in story form, without the meaning embedded in the narrative. Bultmann was very much influenced by Adolf Eulicher who claimed that authentic parables make only a single comparison; they have only one point, and are never allegorical. The parable of the sower, they would say, might be authentic, but the interpretation of it recorded in the text is not because every item has an assigned meaning. That

makes the parable into an allegory. This is too complicated to be a primitive form.

The parable of the wedding feast, which we looked at earlier, you remember—where the guests are invited and a bunch of them turn it down and they go out to get some more, and after they're in there, this guy shows up that doesn't have a wedding garment on etc.—the parable of the wedding feast has two parts to it: the wedding invitation section and the wedding garment section. These [according to Bultmann] were originally two parables combined by the editor of Matthew 22. The king's wedding feast, Matthew 22, is a revised version of the earlier rich man's banquet of Luke 14 with the wars, the son, and the king added later. Authentic parables of Jesus are related to the ministry of Jesus or to the coming of the Kingdom. So Bultmann would throw any others out that have some other topic.

Well, that's kind of a quick tour of how Bultmann does form criticism without going one by one through all the different sayings, et cetera.

### Results for the life of Christ according to Bultmann

The results, by various form critics, will vary considerably depending on where the form critic falls on the liberal-conservative spectrum; but Bultmann is near the extreme liberal end.

Miracle Stories: Even after reducing them to their primitive form, Bultmann concludes that these are not genuine. Why? His worldview does not allow miracles to occur. (See "A Discussion in Evidence of Faith," pages 291 and following.) It's a big assumption. He could have tried to explain them as misunderstood natural events, but apparently he did not want to be ridiculed like Paulus was.

Saying stories: Only two are genuine, that is, go back to Jesus, according to Bultmann. Bultmann threw out using [the] dissonance argument—all that could fit

a Jewish or Christian background. You remember what we said about Martin Luther in that regard. This is a rather strange methodology.

If we threw out everything of Luther's which also fit Catholicism or early Lutheranism, we would hardly have anything left. Perhaps his *Bondage of the Will*, but even this has precedents in Augustinianism. Unless a person has no followers, we would expect to find parallels between his teaching and those of his followers. Unless he is very strange, we'd expect to find parallels between his teaching and that of his culture. The two saying stories which Bultmann admits are Mark 12:13-17—the tribute money, and his argument for authenticity is that neither the Jews nor persecuted Christians liked paying taxes.

Rebuttal: Maybe the source of the story was [the] Herodians or [the] Zealots, depending on whether Jesus is seen as speaking seriously or ironically. Mark 14:3-9—the anointing at Bethany. Argument for authenticity: Allowing perfume to be poured out is strange given the interest in both Christians and Jews in helping the poor, and the “poor are always with you” idea was also thought to be strange. So not scolding at a waste of money is unique, and so Bultmann thought that that was authentic.

### Sayings from Jesus or Not?

We move over to the isolated sayings. Bultmann sees only about forty of these as genuine. [For] the proverbs, he says, none are genuine. The early Christians were not interested in the life of Christ until about 70 or 80 A.D. They then adapted Jewish proverbs already in existence to provide materials to manufacture Jesus' teaching.

Apocalyptic sayings: Some are from Jesus. Others are Christianized Jewish apocalyptic sayings, or sayings by Christian prophets and later ascribed to Jesus.

Bultmann, and a number of form critics, view early Christianity as being like the modern Pentecostal Movement, which is not a compliment in their view.

Basically, prophetic messages by various prophets standing up in congregations were later misattributed to Jesus is basically what Bultmann claims.

Law words: A few of these are from Jesus. Most stem from the legalism of the early church and were invented by them. Jesus was not a legalist, as Bultmann thinks, so only the commands against externalist religion are likely to be authentic, as they go back against legalism.

“I Words”: None of those are from Jesus, according to Bultmann. These speak of his Messianic ministry and his deity; thus, Bultmann rejects them. The Messiah idea, he thinks, was invented by the early church, rather as Wrede in his Messianic Secret theory.

Parables: Some are genuine; however their context and interpretations are later inventions of the church. All predictive features are obviously late additions.

The results for this then: Information on the personality and life of Jesus are rather scarce. Bultmann thinks Jesus lived, suffered, and died, which, by the way, is more than some of your communist arguments would be willing to grant.

Bultmann believes some people followed Jesus, but they misunderstood him if they thought he was the Messiah—much less if they thought he was the Savior or God.

Further results: information on the teaching of Jesus is somewhat clearer. From the forty genuine sayings of Jesus, Bultmann thinks we can deduce some ideas. He says, first of all, Jesus thought of himself as a prophet sent in the last hour to warn men that the kingdom was coming and to call them to repentance and to lives of holiness. These points are all true, but Bultmann has scaled down considerably what Jesus claims and teaches.

Secondly, Bultmann thinks Jesus pictures the coming kingdom as real and imminent, but he was wrong. This is, in fact, a very common liberal view that Jesus and the apostles expected the kingdom to come during their lifetimes. Bultmann and others feel justified by the events, as the kingdom did not—and has not—come. Although it is of some interest to compare this with 2 Peter 3:3:

“Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of his coming, for ever since the fathers fell asleep all continues just as it has from the beginning of creation.’”

Bultmann sees the real value of Jesus’ teaching is the fact that each of us is always faced with the existential choice to live at every moment either for God or for the world. Bultmann sees the only value of Jesus’ teaching in our everyday life as this: There is no afterlife, and there is no future judgment. This everyday value for Israel is present in Jesus' teaching, but only a small fraction of his teaching.

### Evaluation of Form Criticism

That is a very quick tour of Form Criticism and seen largely in terms of Bultmann who is the most influential of those. We come back now and think of an evaluation of Form Criticism. What are we to think of Form Criticism? I will start the evaluation in terms of the assertions that were made back earlier: the assertions of form criticism. So the first of these, there was a period of oral tradition before two generations and the first Gospels were written in the span 70-100 AD.

Well, there was an oral period since the Gospels themselves were not written immediately, but this only lasted perhaps 20 years until 40-50 AD—not the 40-70 years that the liberals claim. After only 20 years there were still many eyewitnesses alive since early events were seen by thousands. Thus, before about 70 AD there were many around for verification. After Jerusalem fell, most Jewish Christians were scattered and many other eyewitnesses were dead. Paul writes 20 years after the events, and none of his letters is over 35 years after Jesus' ministry. He had close contact to the apostles and the Jerusalem church. Early and pervasive tradition says that two gospels were written by apostles and two others by their immediate associates. As a result, there is no real chain of tradition such

as is essential to Form Criticism. In their scheme you've got the event is here and observer A sees some things and he tells B, and B tells C, and C tells D, etc., until you get down to Z or something, and it is written down in a long chain of tradition. Instead, all information in the Gospels was first or second hand with many witnesses and multiple testimonies and plenty of opportunities for checking.

The second assertion of Form Criticism is that early sayings and stories circulated as independent units. Well, we do in fact observe that the gospel structure is often like beads on a string—not always, but often. Detailed incidents are tied together with brief connectives. We saw some of those when we looked over some of the miracle accounts where “just then” is used as a very brief connector. Form Criticism says the early church created most of the beads and nearly all the string to hold them together.

Well, some of the gospel accounts probably were used as independent units in the sense that the apostles traveled around teaching what Jesus said, and what he did, and who he was, etc. They would naturally use individual incidents to illustrate points and teach facts in their preaching. But their incidents never had an independent, isolated circulation in their transmission from event to written gospel. They may have perfectly well have had some isolated circulation that didn't involve that, but because the gospel writers were apostles or immediate hearers, they never had this independent, isolated circulation in that link, if you like. Apostles knew the string as well as the beads, and other teachers like the 70 knew how the incidents went together, and this connecting information was never lost. If the traditional authorship information is at all correct, independent circulation is of no relevance to the content of the canonical Gospels. Besides not all gospel material looks like beads on a string. The passion narrative is too tightly connected to have been independent anecdotes.

Other stories are closely joined together: the woman with the hemorrhage and Jairus' daughter are always interlinked even in the accounts where that occurs. Mark has a tightly united Sabbath-day sequence in Mark 1:21-39. Some sayings

are tightly associated as in Mark 4:21-25 and Mark 8:34-9:1. We see places where the single author who put the units together was a moral and poetic genius. For example, the Sermon on the Mount has striking Hebrew parallelism in its poetic content; its moral teaching is the best ever seen. See also the chiasms noticed by Kenneth Bailey in his *Poet and Peasant* and the various remarks on the literary quality in the parables and sermons of Jesus in Leland Ryken in the *New Testament and Literary Criticism*. How did all these fragments made up by various early groups get woven into this material moral and literary tapestry? What genius did this? Jesus is the best suggestion, but in that case these units had only one source and were never independent.

Thirdly, the gospel materials can be classified into forms. In some sense any written or oral communication can be classified into forms. Beyond this the beads on the string structure of the Gospels allows many examples of relatively short and discreet forms, namely stories and sayings of various sorts. Yet, the formal character of some of Bultmann categories is questionable. Four of Bultmann's five sayings categories, all but the parables are merely descriptive of contents. What style distinguishes a law word and I-word from a proverb? Furthermore, the Passion Narrative has no form which it fits. How can you reduce something this complex to a primitive form? And the dating of formless materials cannot be based on the development of forms. Bultmann has decided in advanced, independent of true forms, which materials are authentic and which he can't believe. We see him throw out all miracle forms even when they have his primitive form.

Fourthly, the early church invented and expanded stories and sayings to meet their practical needs. Surely, one factor in the preservation of material about Jesus was its value to the early church; but this was not the only factor, and there is no need to propose invention.

What do we mean by practical anyway? Note that Paul's epistles are far more practical than the Gospels in meeting the needs of functioning churches as

they are written to real churches having real problems. This is very obvious in the great preponderance of preaching from the epistles that we see in practically oriented churches today. Yet compared with Paul's teaching it appears that many of the churches' interests are not found in the Gospels, and vice versa. The Gospels tell us who Jesus is and what he did—salvation history and biblical theology—but they do not answer many practical issues. Even the details of the practical applications of Jesus' atonement are found in the epistles rather than the Gospels, apparently because Jesus did not discuss this during his earthly ministry.

That people were willing to follow Jesus, even following him to their deaths, suggests he must have done or said something noteworthy. Much of the material in the Gospels is not directly practical to later churches but is important historically in his dealing with the Pharisees and such. The Gospels were concerned to preserve Jesus' ministry, his sayings, and his actions, which is why the church preserves them.

Are the Gospels invention? Many practical things in the Gospels are impossible. The Sermon on the Mount contains much that people cannot do on their own abilities. The legalistic churches are careful not to invent commands that can only be obeyed by grace. When liberals say that Gospel material was invented, they are claiming the early church did not control what was being taught about Jesus; but the New Testament is concerned about truth, about trained elders, and rejecting false teaching. Liberals try to dismiss much of this material, for example, [in] the Pastoral Epistles by pushing their date to the end of the first century. But if there was a group of church leaders who controlled teaching and content from Christ's death until the Gospels were written, then liberals are in trouble. In that case the Gospels are historically reliable and liberal theology is wrong, and there is a judgment to come.

Fifth, the Gospels contained little of biographical/geographical/chronological value. The Gospels have lots of data in these areas. We cannot very well check it all out two thousand years later—we

don't have time machines. Certainly Jesus is pictured as making huge claims regarding himself and the coming judgment. These implications continue to affect man. To deny these claims and the historical value of the Gospels, one must assert that the early church was not interested in the Jesus of history. This is contradicted everywhere. In 1 Corinthians 15, about 25 years after the event, Paul says, "If Christ was not raised, you are still in your sins." Paul does not say, "Take my word for it," but appeals to many witnesses who are still living. Twenty-five years after the event, one could still check the details about the life of Christ.

### The Apostles in the Gospels

Luke 1:1-4 explicitly says that the author had an interest in what really happened. He apparently interviewed eyewitnesses and investigated matters carefully. Acts 1:21-22, when selecting a replacement for Judas, the apostles pick someone who has been with them from Christ's baptism to the resurrection. Thus the apostles were not only witnesses of Jesus' resurrection, but also of his ministry. This shows great interest in the history of Jesus. The early church was also concerned that this material be transmitted carefully. (See the concern in 2 Thessalonians 2:2, 2:15 and 3:17 about fake messages and letters from Paul regarding the Second Coming.) Paul says he personally signs his letters as proof of their authenticity. 2 Timothy 2:2 says to commit to faithful men what you have heard in the presence of many witnesses, so Timothy had more than just Paul's word to go on. We see a similar statement, by the way, in the rabbinic literature of the Mishnah Ediyot 5:7 where Rabbi Akaviah Ben-Mahaliel is on his deathbed, around 90 AD. He tells his son to repeat only what he had heard from a majority of teachers, [and to] ignore the tradition that comes from one only, even if it is "his father."

To hold onto their position, form critics reject papist testimony regarding a close connection between the Gospels and the apostles, though there is no external evidence against it. They have obviously papist testimony that the Apostle Matthew is behind the Gospel of Matthew; and Peter, through Mark, is responsible for the Gospel of Mark. Liberals make the Apostle Matthew the author of Q at best, and say all other early references are based on the misinterpretation of papists. This is a big assumption. Could Irenaeus be limited to papists alone as his data source, when his primary teacher was Polycarp? Note that the Gnostics had to go to plot theories in order to claim authority for their teachings. They agreed that the public teaching of Jesus was just as the canonical gospels had it, but claimed it was incomplete and had to be supplemented with the secret words of Jesus. Compare the opening words of the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Judas, both of which make reference to secret teachings. All this shows that the church was interested in who Jesus really was and that their written documents were good. Marcion even modified Luke instead of throwing everything out as unreliable.

### Falsification in the Gospels?

Sixth, the original version of each tradition unit may be recovered, and its history traced by using the laws which govern tradition. Even if we grant that Bultmann's laws of tradition are valid, though, in fact, they have serious problems—this does not prove falsification occurred in the Gospels. Claims that during transmission of tradition details tend to increase, names are added, discourse shifts from indirect to direct, do not fit with Mark being the source of Matthew and Luke where Mark has lots of direct discourse and often more details than Matthew and Luke have. It is true that these tendencies frequently do

characterize transformation of stories and sayings as in fleshing out a sermon illustration, but even a tendency to do something like that does not prove it was done in a particular case. The problem is that for an event which really happened, the people did have real names, they really did speak with direct discourse, and the events actually occurred in great detail. So all these things were in the original event. Given two narratives of an event with different levels of detail—one less, one more—you have to guess which one is older. Here is the original event with all the detail and then it comes back down, and then eventually it gets very low, and then people begin to invent stuff; and does the long arrow belong over here with a short arrow behind it further away from the event, or does the short arrow belong here and the long arrow back over here? You don't know.

Even if one grants some falsification in the Gospels, is there enough to completely throw out the teaching of the last judgment? Liberals must say that the Gospels are totally unreliable in order to do this. Could this have happened in one generation within a group that was obviously so concerned about truth? One cannot throw out miracle stories on the basis of loss of tradition. This would resemble concluding from fish stories that fish do not exist. The laws of tradition only allow simplifying the stories, but not ruling them out altogether. Bultmann and liberals strike miracles on the assumption that they cannot occur. No scientist, much less Bultmann, knows enough to say that our universe is a closed system of cause and effect into which even God cannot penetrate. Bultmann's procedure guarantees finding a non-miraculous, unorthodox Jesus using the dissonance principle, but does it actually tell us anything about the real Jesus?

### Lessons from Form Criticism

Well, some positive lessons from form criticism. First of all, the Gospel accounts contain just the sort of material we would expect in the authentic reminiscences of men who witnessed memorable events, especially if they were charged with teaching these events and had then done so for some time before writing. We observe, for instance, broad outlines. So, all the Gospels are the same in regard to the broad outlines, a general sequence and overview of the period. We see many single simple incidents, memorable occasions, anecdotes, things of that sort. We see some sequences; these involve both trivial and major items and the inner linkages between them. We observe forms and rounding off. By the way, these are more characteristic of oral repetition by one person than of oral transmission through many individuals. The frequent reuse of materials in a travelling ministry would tend to shape striking statements and miracles into this form. A person thinking through and learning by experience: how telling a story did or did not get the point over, and how he was able to get in and out of it without a lot of words. So that's one of our lessons. The Gospel accounts do contain just the sort of material we expect in authentic reminiscences.

Secondly, form criticism is hyper-skeptical. If it were applied elsewhere, we would know very little about the past. Some skepticism is helpful, but with too much you throw out much of what you need. Once we get beyond living people, you must rely on written documents and oral traditions. Films and videos can't be trusted any more than writing.

Form criticism, thirdly, has made a positive contribution by showing us that we have no tradition in the Gospels of a non-messianic, non-miraculous, purely human Jesus. If we take the primitive forms before Bultmann throws them out, you still have miracles and messianic claims. Jesus considered himself able to forgive sin; he claims a close relationship with the Father, to be human, but uniquely divine, all of which were noted by the principal Bultmannians. Bultmann must go beyond form criticism with blanket worldview assumptions in order to

throw this material out. The Christ of the Gospels continues to be a contradiction to those who have ruled out the supernatural.

Well, we are going to turn to redaction criticism here, but let's stop for a moment. Ok, let me run and get a drink. And the other section is shorter, except we do have some conclusions after that.

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## Dr. Robert C. Newman, Synoptics, Lecture 15

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### Redaction Criticism

We're going to turn, then, to Redaction Criticism. What is Redaction Criticism? When you look at some definitions, redaction is the activity of a redactor. That brings the question of, "What's a redactor?" Well, we could say, "A person who does redaction." But we'll say, "A synonym for editor." And then Redaction Criticism is a type of biblical study concerned with the activity of redactors, or editors. Norman Perrin in his little booklet, *What is Reaction Criticism*, on page one says, "It is concerned with studying the theological motivation of an author, as this is revealed in the collection, arrangement, editing and modification of traditional material, and in the composition of new material, or the creation of new forms within the traditions of early Christianity."

I'm going to give you a very quick sketch here of Redaction Criticism. It is a relatively recent development in liberal New Testament criticism for which we give a quick review. We talked earlier about the Synoptic Problem in source criticism. Since the second century there had been debate and discussion regarding the similarities and differences among the Gospels and how to explain them. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, a sort of consensus had been reached called the two-document theory with Q and Mark as sources of Matthew and Luke. This type of work is called Literary, or Source Criticism. [As for] the historical reliability of the Gospels, this discussion went on in parallel with the Synoptic Problem. There became especially sharp debate with the rise of theological liberalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the end of that century, so around 1900, most liberals felt Mark was the most reliable Gospel, and except for its miracles, basically historical. Wilhelm

Wrede, in his *Messianic Secret*, 1901, argued that Mark was not reliable history, but theologically motivated to present Jesus as Messiah, though Jesus never claimed to be such.

Then Form Criticism arose in the New Testament studies just after World War II in Germany. Its pioneers were Carl Schmidt, Martin Dibelius, and especially Rudolph Bultmann. They accepted Wrede's claim that Mark made up his own framework, and they tried to go beyond the Gospels to study the period of oral transmission. Most form critics claim that between Jesus' life and the writing of the Gospels, much material was invented, and much was changed.

Well, that brings us to Redaction Criticism. Redaction Criticism seeks to round out the critical analysis of the Gospels by filling in areas overlooked by Form Criticism and Source Criticism. It studies the work of the Gospel editors, especially their theological motivation in compiling oral materials to form written accounts, or in combining and editing written materials to form their Gospels. So Form Criticism is up here about the oral tradition; Source Criticism is down here about Mark and Q and their relationship to Matthew and Luke; and Redaction Criticism is looking at what Mark does in choosing traditions and modifying them, and what Q does in choosing tradition and modifying it; and especially what Matthew and Luke do in selecting material out of Mark and Q.

Redaction Criticism was foreshadowed in the work of Wrede and Bultmann, but especially in R.H. Lightfoot's *Baton Lecture*, 1934. R.H. Lightfoot is to be distinguished from J.B. Lightfoot from the 19<sup>th</sup> century who was a much more conservative man. However the real flowering of Redaction Criticism came from Germany just after World War II. So [while] Form Criticism comes out of Germany just after World War I, Redaction Criticism comes out of Germany just after World War II. The works involved here are Gunter Bornkamm and his work on Matthew in 1948, and following Hans Conzelman and his work on Luke in 1954, and Wille Markson in his work on Mark in 1956. More recently, Redaction

Criticism is spread to the study of Q and of John. Robert Gundry's work on *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* in 1982 represents a spread of the method in the evangelical circles for which Gundry was actually voted out of the Evangelical Theological Society. Gundry feels that Matthew invented some of his incidents in his Gospel to make theological points; namely, the visit of the magi and the killing of the babies. Gundry may be the most radical evangelical here, but he's certainly not alone.

### Methodology of Redaction Criticism

Let's think a little about methodology in Redaction Criticism. How does Redaction Criticism operate? The following steps give us sketch of the procedures involved. Redaction Criticism is concerned to examine the editing work of, typically, one editor at a time, anyway. So you carefully compare all differences between a given gospel and its parallels. So, for instance, say you're going to look at the redacting work of Matthew, let's say, for which you mean the author of the Gospel Matthew, which Gundry, I think, did think it was Matthew. I have to check that, as I don't remember that now. So you would compare Matthew with Mark and Luke and note where differences occur in each of their accounts to attempt to discover those differences which are the result of the editorial activity of the writer under study. Which of these are things that Matthew did? So when you're comparing Mark's account with Matthew's account, is this what Matthew did to it or not? That sort of thing.

Typically then, you have to assume some sort of order in the relationship of the Gospels. Almost invariably the assumption is the two document theory which, among actual researchers in the Gospel, in those kind of questions, is certainly the majority view but is not a vast majority view. But when you get down to

Redaction Criticism, that's what the vast majority of scholars are going with. That two document model holds that Matthew used Mark and Q. Then, secondly, you assume the writer has no other sources, or at least that his own contribution can be distinguished by style. Then you compare statistics on style to recognize the author's contribution in areas where it would otherwise be uncertain. So you've looked at the differences, and now you're trying to distinguish for the particular example we're thinking Matthew's work, etc. Then thirdly, you study these detailed differences to determine the author's theological motivation for introducing these differences. Once you've figured out what those are, you locate texts which interpret these motivations and then you interpret the whole Gospel in terms of these texts and motivations.

Fourthly, you reconstruct the author's outlook, his circumstances, his group and his audience. That is what the Germans call *sitz im leben*, or "life situation" of the author, etc. Marxan, in working with the redaction criticism in Mark, is typical in seeing three *sitz im leben*—three life situations—in a given Gospel passage. There's first of all the ministry of Jesus. Marxan and all these others would admit Jesus existed and that he really did things like they say so, and what some of the *sitz im leben*, one *sitz im leben*, is the minister Jesus. But then there's the background of the sources, and those would be Mark and Q and proto-Mark, or various sorts of things of that sort: what is their *sitz im leben*? And then you got the redactor, the background of the Gospel writer, the *sitz im leben* of that person. So for Marxan that would be Mark, for Gundry that would be Matthew, etc.

### Results of Rhetorical Criticism

We're not going to go through that in detail; this is just a short presentation at the end of a course, but what are some results of Redaction Criticism in liberal circles? We know very little about the life of Jesus. But we can reconstruct lots of

diverse groups in early Christianity. In conservative circles, Redaction Criticism is much more restrained among evangelicals, but with the work of Gundry and others, it's beginning to introduce the idea that not all narratives describe events which really occurred. Matthew for Gundry becomes a kind of *Midrash*, a term borrowed from rabbinic nomenclature: an imaginative retelling or invention of events that makes various theological points.

### Evaluation of Redaction Criticism

Well, we will give an evaluation of Redaction Criticism. I start out with a few favorable comments because we're going to talk about some problems later on. First of all, favorable: the Gospel writers did select incidents, materials about Jesus, which they chose to record. Presumably, they also condensed this material. So John 20:30-31 and John 21:25 tells us, you know, there's lots of material out there and I've selected this to help you see Jesus as Messiah so that you might have life in his name. And Luke 1:1 refers to compiling an account.

Secondly, any detailed study of the gospel is bound to produce some valuable insights. The approach does study the Gospels in great detail. And thirdly, the gospel writers apparently did emphasize various features of Jesus' ministry in their selection and presentation as we may see by comparing their gospels. Matthew emphasizes Jesus as the king messiah, coming in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy to set up a kingdom of heaven and makes these parallels between Jesus and Israel. He preserves the substantial discourses of Jesus. Mark emphasizes Jesus' actions and brief words to answer the question, who is this man? In fact, this is asked by different people in the path of the Gospel Mark. His answer is: he's the Messiah, he's the Son of God. Luke has an emphasis on historicity, as you see in his prologue and eye witness testimony to Jesus. He had an interest in social relationships: in Gentiles, women, and the poor, and has illustrative parables. John had emphasis on Jesus' significance, both individual and

cosmic, and his person as revealed in his words and miracles. John has more symbolism, more allegorical parables, but still the same Jesus. These emphases do give us insight into the theological concerns of the writers. So those are favorable comments. They did select materials. Any detailed study will produce valuable insights: the Gospels did apparently emphasize various features of Jesus' ministry, etc., and these emphases do give us insight into theological concerns of the Gospel writers.

There are some serious problems however. Some of the results that form critics get, even a form critic like Gundry, are alarming. We get, first of all, a rejection of historical details. Wrede said Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah. Perrin, who is strictly more of a redaction critic, says we know little about Jesus. Here's what his statement looks like.

That redaction criticism makes the Jesus search very much more difficult, is, of course, immediately obvious with the recognition that so much material of the Gospels must be ascribed to the theological motivation of an evangelist or of an editor of the tradition, or a prophet or a preacher of the church. We must come to recognize that the light foot will fully and absolutely come behind. The Gospels do, indeed, give us only a whisper of Jesus' voice. Is this practice what we must take as our starting point? The assumption is the Gospels offer us at the starting point direct information of the theology of the early church and not about the teaching of the historical Jesus.

All of that on page 69 of *What is Redaction Criticism?* And then, just a few pages further on, the conclusion: don't base faith on him. "The real cutting edge of the impact of redaction criticism is the fact that it raises very serious questions, indeed, about that which has normally motivated life of Jesus research. It raises above all the question as to whether the view of the historical Jesus as the locus of revelation and the central concern of Christian faith is, in fact, justifiable" (page

72). That's Norman Perrin, very much a mainline liberal.

Robert Gundry, a somewhat—shall we say—radical evangelical, says the visit of the wise men and Egypt never happened, pages 26, 32, 34, 35 of his commentary. I'll read out these:

Matthew now turns to a visit of the local shepherds. Luke 2: 8-20 into admiration of Gentile magi from foreign parts. Just as the women besides Mary in the genealogy pointed forward to the Gentiles in the church, so also the coming of the magi previews the entrance of disciples being sent to all nations into the circles who acknowledge Jesus as the king of the Jews and worship him as God.”

All that is on page 26.

“Then when he's coming in chapter 2 verse 13, to carry on the motif of flight from persecution, Matthew changes the going up to Jerusalem by the whole family, Luke 2:22 into a flight from Egypt,” page 22.

Then let's jump on to pages 34 and 35. Matthew pursues Mosaic typology further with an episode of the Pharaoh slaughtering the male babies of the Israelites at the time of Moses' birth. To do so he changes the sacrificial slaying of a pair of turtledoves for two young pigeons to place at the presentation of the day Jesus at the temple, Luke 2:24. Compare Leviticus 12, 6-8. In the Herod slaughtering of the babies in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, the sorrow of the babies' mothers corresponds to the sword that was going to pierce the heart of Mary according to Simeon's prediction at the presentation of the temple, Luke 1:35. Compare Matthew 2:18. Herod's massive crimes made it easy for Matthew to manipulate the dominical tradition in the study,” (pages 34, 35). So that's the

rejection of recorded historical detail. The alarming feature we see is the generation of hypothetical historical details.

Billy Marxan in *The Setting of Mark* has described, like Perrin on pages 38 and 39, in thus carrying Redaction Criticism to its furthest limit. Marxan, perhaps, points the way to a still future day and work. “This new departure is the conception that the Markan theology reflects a situation in Galilee in the year 66 A.D., at the beginning of the Jewish war against Rome.” Marxan believes that the Christian community of Jerusalem had fled from Jerusalem to Galilee at the beginning of the war, that there they were waiting the *parousia*, which they believed to be eminent. The Gospel Mark, Marxan claims, reflects the situation in theology. So, for example, the present ending of the Gospel at 16:8 is the true ending. Mark did not intend to go on to report resurrection appearances in Galilee. The references to Galilee in 14:25 and 16:7 are not references to the resurrection at all, but to the *parousia*. Mark expects this event to take place immediately in his own day.

It is not our purpose here to defend or debate with Marxan the correctness of his insight with regard to the place and time of the composition of Mark’s gospel. Our concern is to point out that here we are moving beyond Redaction Criticism itself to a still newer stage, a stage in which we work from a theological insight we’ve been able to determine to the historical situation in which that insight arose, of generational, hypothetical, historical details.

Gundry, on the background of the Gospel of Matthew (This is page 5 and 6 of Gundry, noting Matthew’s emphases), “We can infer the situation in which he wrote and the purposes for which he wrote. This will also reveal a theology characteristic of his Gospel. Matthew shows great concern over the problem of a mixed church. The church has grown large from the influx of converts from throughout all nations (Matthew 28:18-20). But these converts include false as well as true disciples.”

Then he cites a bunch of passages by verse and chapters there. "The distinction between them is coming to light through the persecution of the church (Matthew 5:10-12). This persecution does not have its source through the Roman government, but among the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. Matthew constantly exposes and heightens their guilt (2 citations in Chapter 27 and 28). True disciples are suffering with endurance; some of them had to flee for their lives. False disciples, on the other hand, are making public disclaimers of Jesus in order to avoid persecution. At their head, false disciples have false prophets who appear to be subtle ecclesiastics (i.e. church officials whose easy going attitudes and policies of accommodation have reserved them from the hardships of itinerate ministry). These false prophets seemed to have come into the church from the Pharisaical sect and the scribal occupations."

Look at all that information about the book of Matthew, where'd he get it? They assume that various remarks in Jesus' mouth are allusions to these things.

A third alarming feature is the addition of a genre of historical fiction descriptor. Perrin says, page 75, "The Gospel of Mark is the prototype, which others follow, and is a mixture of historical reminiscence, interpreted tradition and the free creativity of prophets and evangelists." It is, in other words, a strange mixture of history, legend and myth. It is this fact which Redaction Criticism makes unmistakably clear. Gundry calls it "midrash," or "haggada," but compares it to modern historical novels, which combine truth and fiction (pages 630 and 632 in his commentary).

### Fallacies of Rhetorical Criticism

Well, those are the examples of some alarming phenomena that are occurring, but behind them some methods are suspect. We categorize these under various different headings which we'll call fallacies. They're not fallacies in the typical larger sense. The terminology is my own, but the methodological problems are noted by many others of whom C.S. Lewis, a professional literary critic, is a

prominent example, and I quote from him on a number of occasions.

I call the first fallacy in methodological Redaction Criticism--the "Sand-Foundation" fallacy. Redaction Criticism builds an elaborate methodology on questionable assumptions, which should be carefully reexamined when they produce such results. One of these assumptions is the Two-Document Theory of the Gospels. A second one is, for Gundry, the total dependence of Matthew on Mark and Q. So he assumes that Matthew has no sources but Mark and Q, and so he has to generate the wise men visit out of the material that he thinks Luke has preserved from Q regarding the shepherds and the visit of the temple, etc.

A second problem is what I call the "Explanation Fallacy," and in this we have the assumption that any explanation is to be favored over ignorance. This is a problem both for Redaction Criticism on the liberal side and sometimes harmonization on the conservative side. Sometimes we just don't know the answer! So, we can say, "Here are the problem passages and we think these can be harmonized by this way or, perhaps, by this way or this way, but we don't have time machines. We don't know for sure, but anyway, I favor this one; but I wasn't there, all right?"

You're getting that same kind of phenomenon going on with Redaction Criticism, though they don't always tell you that there are other alternatives there. Lewis says--this comment in his essay on criticism in the book on stories, pages 132 and 133--"Nearly all critics (he says) are prone to imagine that they know a great many facts relevant to a book, which, in reality, they don't know."

The author, Lewis, who had been an author and had his books reviewed, inevitably perceived their ignorance because he alone knew the real facts.

[Continuing with Lewis:] "There was a very good instance of this lately in the review of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. Most critics assumed that it must be a political allegory and a great many assumed that the ring must be the atomic bomb. Anyone who knew the real history of the composition knew that this was

not only erroneous, but impossible, chronologically impossible—that is that Tolkien had already written into the Ring before any civilians knew of the atomic bomb. Others assumed that the mythology of the romance had grown out of the children’s story of the Hobbit.

"Now, of course, nobody blames the critics for not knowing these things; how should they? The trouble is they don’t know that they don’t know! A guess leaps into their minds, and they write it down without even noticing that it is a guess. Here, certainly, the warning to all of us as critics is very clear and alarming. Critics of 'Piers Plowman' and the 'Faerie Queen' make gigantic constructions about the history of these compositions. Of course, we should all admit that all constructions are conjectural, and as conjectures you may ask, 'Are they not, some of them, probable?' Perhaps they are, but the experience of being reviewed has lowered my estimate of their probability because when you start by knowing the facts, you find that the constructions are very often totally wrong. Apparently their chances of being right are very low, even when they are made along very sensible lines.

“Hence, I cannot resist the conviction that similar guesses about the dead seem plausible only because the dead are not there to refute them. Five minutes conversation with the real Spencer or the real Langlen, the authors of 'Faerie Queen' and 'Piers Plowman, might blow the whole laborious fabric into smithereens” (that’s pages 132, 133). So, it’s better not to know the answer and know we don’t know, than to know the wrong answer.

A third problem is what I call the "Dissertation Fallacy." Ph.D. industry drives this problem. The need of Ph.D. candidates to write their dissertation on something new and academic can lead to rejecting a straightforward explanation for an involved one, [which means] rejecting recorded history for reconstructed history, rejecting direct evidence for indirect evidence. The result is a new sort of allegorizing (you remember Perrin’s remark on page 42).

The questions, answers and teachings are on the lips of Jesus and Peter, but

[critics say] the titles involved are from the Christological vocabulary of the early church. Although the characters are secondary so the *pericopes* bear names and designations derived from the circumstances of the ministry, Jesus, Peter, the multitude, they also meekly represent the circumstances of the early church. Jesus is the lord addressing the church; Peter represents fallible believers who confess correctly, yet go on to interpret their confession incorrectly; and the multitude is the whole church membership for whom the general teaching, which follows, is designed.

So we come to the all-important point so far as redaction critical view of the narrative is concerned. It has the form of a story of a historical Jesus and his disciples, but a purpose in terms of the risen Lord and the church (page 42). Note the response of Lewis, saying [in] the article of criticism in his book on stories, "Where the critic seems to me most often to go wrong is the hasty assumption of an allegorical sense; and as reviewers make this mistake about contemporary works, so in my opinion scholars often make it yet about the old ones. I would recommend both, and I would try to reserve in my own critical practices these principles. First, that no story can be devised by the wit of man, which cannot be interpreted allegorically by the wit of some other man. The Stoic interpretations of primitive mythology, the Christian interpretation of the Old Testament, the medieval interpretations of the classics all prove this. Therefore, too, the mere fact that you can allegorize the work before you is in itself no proof that it is an allegory. We ought not to proceed to allegorize any work until we have plainly set out the reasons for regarding it as allegory at all (page 140, 141).

A fourth problem I see is what I call the "Argument from Silence Fallacy." If a particular incident appears in only one gospel, the writer must have invented it rather than having additional information. Let's compare this to a Lewis' remark on page 131. "Negative statements are, of course, particularly dangerous for the lazy or harried reviewer, and here it is a lesson for us all as critics. One passage out of the whole "Faerie Queen" will justify you saying that Spencer sometimes

does so and so. Only an exhaustive of reading and an unerring memory will justify the statement that he never does so. This everyone sees. What more easily escapes one is the concealed negative in statements apparently positive. For example, in any statement that contains a predicate 'new,' one says lightly that something which Dunn or Stern or Hopkins did was new, thus committing themselves to the negative that no one had done it before, but this is beyond one's knowledge; taken rigorously, it's beyond anyone's knowledge. Again, things we are all apt to say about the growth or the development of the poet may often imply the negative that he wrote nothing except what came down to us, which no one knows. If we had what now looks like an abrupt change in his manner from poem A to poem B might turn out not to have been abrupt at all." So the fact that a given gospel writer does not mention some detail does not guarantee that he does not know it.

A fifth problem is what I call the "Psychoanalytic Fallacy." A critic can infer the author's motivation from his writing. Differences between the gospels are tendentious other than accidentally on matters of emphasis. Here Lewis says a good remark on that, page 134. "Another type of critic who speculates about the genesis of your book is the amateur psychologist. Here's a Freudian theory of literature, [which] claims to know all about your inhibitions. He knows which unacknowledged wishes you are gratifying, and here one cannot claim to start by knowing all the facts. By definition, you, the author, are unconscious of the things he professes to discover. Therefore the more loudly you disclaim them, the more right he must be. Though, oddly enough, if you admitted them, that would prove him right, too, and there is further difficulty. One is not therefore free from bias, for this procedure is entirely confined to hostile reviewers. And now that I come to think of it, I have seldom seen it practiced on a dead author except by a scholar who intended in some measure to debunk him."

Some examples: Lewis, on the origin of his novel *Perelandra*, [and] on his stories (page 144), Lewis is talking to some other writers of his time; Brian Aldiss

is the one who shows up here. Lewis says, “The starting point of the second novel, *Perelandra*, (this is in his science fiction trilogy) was my mental picture of the floating islands; the whole of the rest of my labors, in a sense, consisted of building up a world in which floating islands could exist. And then, of course, the story about an averted fall developed. This is, because you know, having gotten your people to this exciting country, something must happen.” Aldiss says, “But I’m surprised that you put it this way around. I would have thought you would have constructed *Perelandra* for the didactic purposes.” Lewis, “Yes, everyone thinks that. They’re quite wrong.”

The "Intellectual Snobbery Fallacy": We all tend to envy those with more prestige than we have. Here, usually, university liberals intend to look down on those with less, especially conservatives of some sort.

Well, those are my six fallacies, if you like; problems with the methodology of Redaction Criticism.

### Conclusions on some Redaction Criticism

The comments above should not be taken as an argument for anti-intellectualism. Rather, it’s a call for a sober assessment of our own abilities and for a fear of God, who, according to 1 Cor. 3:19, “Takes the wise in their craftiness” and against whom, according to Proverbs 21:30, “There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel.”

### Course Conclusion

Well, that’s our discussion for Redaction Criticism. Now we want, rather briefly, to pull together some conclusions about gospel history as a whole [and] about this whole course. We’ve looked at several topics relevant to the matter of the historical accuracy of the gospel, [and] in particular, the Synoptic Gospels. We’ve looked at modern views about Jesus, and we have seen that people have all

kinds of views about Jesus. The Jehovah's Witness say that Jesus is not God; the Mormons says Jesus was God, but you can be too; the old liberals say that Jesus was divine like all men are, like Harry Emerson Fostic's mother was, etc. All these views have only tangential connections with the Bible; all are new forms of idolatry, which may be comfortable, but not any good to help you in a jam since the gods made to enforce these views do not actually exist. We also looked at very historical views, of which the Jesus Seminar is the most current fad. They claim to use the historical data; but, in fact, they pick the points they like from it.

This brings us to historical data about Jesus. In your reading, I had assigned my students to read Gregory Boyd, "Cynic, Sage or Son of God?" or Lee Strobel, "The Case for Christ." You may have noticed that early pagan sources tell us very little about Jesus. We do see them admitting it's historical, something that liberals would not like to admit: Messianic claims, miracles works and such. Jewish materials reflect a negative reaction against Christ, just as the New Testament says Jewish opponents of Jesus responded, and just as the Old Testament predicted they would. They were not able to deny his existence and the profound impact [he made], and [they] still cannot explain away the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy and Jesus.

Why is there so little about Jesus in non-Christian sources? We don't know for sure. Perhaps it is like the media situation today. We frequently see the media avoiding reports on things that they don't like, particularly when it is difficult to give them a negative spin. As regard to the New Testament testimony about Jesus, Paul is writing in the mid-50s, and it is very tough to get around. His testimony provides fine details about Christ in places within a general picture that is consistent with the gospel pictures.

That brings us to three: the gospels are principle sources about Jesus. The gospels contain over 100 pages of details about Jesus. By size, age and provenance, they are our principal sources for any kind of historical study about

him. The external evidence is quite firm regarding their authors, matching the names we find on the titles of each, with no evidence for any other suggestions. Except for John, these are not the names one would have chosen if names were being invented. The external evidence for the dates and order of writing of the gospels must be discarded by liberals in order to maintain the Two-Document Theory. Even so, the theory does not really do a better job of explaining the internal evidence than the suggestions we've proposed, which anchors the gospel content in the apostolic teaching. At nearly a 2000 year distance, we cannot answer all alleged contradictions in the gospel material, but we can make suggestions for them which are consistent with historical reliability. We should not let concern over such matters lead us into adopting views with far more problems, thus becoming like those who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel. These matters are not just academic, they have influenced all liberal pastors, most large denominations, the secular media and many of the people you would try to reach for Christ, especially those who have received a university education. They have caused many Christians who have been exposed to such material to live in doubt of the gospel date about Jesus. They have led many people to reject Christianity altogether and are used by most religions in opposition to Christianity. We must press the evidence and call people to live responsibly in light of it.

Well, that's the Synoptic Gospels for this course. Thank you for your attention.

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**The END**

