

Dr. Dave Mathewson, Hermeneutics, Lecture 10, Source and Form Criticism

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We've been looking at hermeneutics and biblical interpretation in the last session, and we'll look so today, at issues related to historical criticism, and we said that hermeneutics both sort of logically but historically move through and moves through the three major phases of communication that is focusing on the author and historical matters and background matters that produce the text, then moving on to text-centered approaches where meaning is found within the text, and finally on to reader-centered approaches where the reader is the primary one responsible for meaning and text and making sense of text. But we've been looking at kind of the first phase that is historical approaches, historical criticism. Under that, we said historical criticism is sort of an umbrella where under that is included a number of types of studies such as looking at the author and historical background of a book, the original readers and their circumstances, specific historical references within the text, but we also want to consider and just begin to consider the three other approaches that fall under and have fallen under historical type approaches, and the first one is source criticism that we introduced very briefly in the last session, and we said source criticism is a methodology that attempts to get behind the text and to uncover the written sources, the documents that authors utilized in their own compositions, and we looked at one text in particular, Luke chapter 1, verses 1 through 4, where the author clearly seems to be reliant on previous sources, written sources to some degree.

We noted examples in the Old Testament where the narrators rely on and even explicitly indicate their reliance on sources, on written sources, even if those sources are no longer available. But because of that, source criticism developed as an attempt to uncover or reconstruct the possible written sources that lie behind the

Old New Testament documents as we have them, and so the assumption is that biblical authors relied on historical sources and relied on different written sources for their own composition. To utilize or to give a couple of examples from the Old and New Testament of source criticism and how it developed and how it works, and then perhaps to say a few things by way of evaluation of the method.

First of all, the Old Testament, we have considered already and mentioned already the Book of Chronicles, for example, when we discussed the fact that later Old Testament authors sometimes pick up earlier Old Testament writings and texts and reinterpret them and reassert them for their own readership. First and Second Chronicles seems then to take up material from First and Second Kings as a source, though the author again uses it for his own purposes, but First and Second Kings seems to be a source that the author of First and Second Chronicles draws upon for his own writing. For example, when you compare, to utilize one text that we'll talk about later as well, but when you note First and Second Chronicles and the relationship also to another document or another book, especially First Chronicles and Chapter 17, starting with verse 10, I declare to you that the Lord will build a house for you.

When your days are over and you go to be with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son.

I will never take my love from him as I took it away from your predecessor. I will set him over my house and my kingdom forever. His throne will be established forever.

And then verse 15 concludes by saying, Nathan reported to David all the words of this entire revelation. You probably recognize that language that I just read from

another text, and that is Second Samuel Chapter 7, where in Second Samuel 7, 14, and the verses that precede that Second Samuel 7, 14, is part of the covenant that God makes with David speaking through the prophet Nathan. But if you go back and read both texts together, the Second Samuel 7 and then First Chronicles 17, you'll note that the wording in many places is virtually identical and very similar, so that again, most likely one of the books functions as a source for the other one.

The author has, one of the authors has drawn on the other as a source for his own composition. But we'll pick this text up again to demonstrate, and this gets into one of the other methods known as redaction criticism. The authors, though, when they utilize their sources, they use them for their own purposes and their own intention, and that's a later method that we'll discuss, redaction criticism, asks the question, how has the author taken up the source? How has the author of Chronicles taken up his sources and now used them for his own purposes and for his own intention? But the point here is to demonstrate that because of the similarity of wording and even content, obviously biblical authors take up and utilize earlier sources, even earlier biblical sources, in their own composition.

Perhaps the classic example in Old Testament studies comes from the creation narrative in Genesis chapters 1 and 2, and in fact that could be extended to include the entire Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament. Genesis 1 and 2, though, to just focus on one aspect of the first five books of the Old Testament, Genesis 1 and 2 is an account of two different creation narratives, two different creation stories, and what is intriguing is that back-to-back you would have two stories that are very similar, yet they also reveal distinct differences. For example, chapters 1 and 2, some scholars have noted the difference in style or the difference in order in the way the different parts of creation are recorded.

They've also noted the different names used for God in chapters 1 and 2, and because of that, some earlier on in the heyday of source criticism, and still today you sometimes find this going on, is Old Testament scholars are convinced that they can isolate two separate sources behind Genesis 1 and 2 in the different accounts of the creation narrative, and then a later author has taken these two sources and now will put them together in his own account. Again, this insight has been extended over the entire Pentateuch. You may have heard of the well-known JEPD theory.

Those letters J, E, P, and D are letters meant to kind of label four separate sources that exist in the entire Pentateuch, and for example, J being the first name of Yahweh, and there was presumably an author that wrote, especially using the name of Yahweh, that wrote a source from a certain perspective, and the letter D, for example, stands for the Deuteronomic perspective, that someone writing from the perspective of the Book of Deuteronomy composed parts of the Pentateuch. So the point is, historically, you have four separate sources that were written by authors, and again, scholars have labeled those the J source, the E source, the D source, and then the P source, the P expressing the priestly perspective, for example, and scholars have been convinced that they could isolate four separate sources, and they've even gone further, and they've dated them and provided even a setting for the original composition of these sources, but now, much later, an author has taken these four separate sources and welded them together into what we have as the final form that we call the Pentateuch. My purpose is not, although I don't subscribe to this necessarily, my purpose is not to evaluate this, but obviously you can begin to see some of the questions that might arise, that is, by what criteria do we isolate sources, and interestingly, some of the criteria that previous scholars use to isolate sources are used by others to demonstrate the unity of the text.

Also, sometimes it appears to me to border on speculation to begin to reconstruct a hypothetical date and a hypothetical community or situation that gave rise to the

source, etc., etc., so my main purpose is just to demonstrate how source criticism has been used in trying to isolate underlying written sources that a later author has now picked up. Again, sometimes in a book like Chronicles and Kings and Samuel, there does seem to be a definite relationship between the documents. One seems to have functioned as a source of the other.

When it comes to the Pentateuch, though, this is more hypothetical. No one has access to the existence of J-E-P-R-D, unlike the fact that we have First and Second Kings, and we have Samuel, and we have Chronicles, or we have references within Kings of the author explicitly appealing to the annals of the King of Judah, or something like that. But source criticism played a role in Old Testament scholarship in isolating and analyzing and reconstructing the underlying sources of the Old Testament text.

You can also begin to see that however much value this might have, source criticism did give way to the method that we mentioned a little bit earlier, redaction criticism that focuses more on not so much reconstructing sources, but the fact that we must deal with the text as we have it. What we have is the entire Pentateuch, and so one must ultimately deal with that text rather than simply the hypothetical sources that can be isolated or analyzed that seem to now be included in the final composition. In the New Testament, the classic example of source criticism is probably the Synoptic Gospels, the first three Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

And the reason for that is very similar to the situation with Kings and Chronicles and Samuel. The first three Gospels in particular, though John is very different in some of the material it contains, the wording and the language that is used, the first three Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, seem to indicate some type of relationship between the three, however we explain that. So when you look at Matthew, Mark, and Luke, you notice that there is not only a similarity in content as far as the events

of the life of Christ that are recorded, and the sayings and teachings of Jesus, but they occur in a roughly similar order, sometimes an identical order, but even beyond that, when you start comparing Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the wording is virtually identical in places, and to such a degree that if any of my students produce papers, research papers, that agreed in order and wording to the same extent that the Synoptic Gospels do, I would suspect some kind of collaboration and some kind of borrowing that one of the students must have borrowed from another, or perhaps they both borrowed from a similar document, or a similar prior research paper.

To give you but one example, and the Synoptic Gospels are full of these, in Matthew chapter 3 and 7 and 9, we'll compare a text from Matthew chapter 3 and Luke chapter 3 as well. In Matthew chapter 3 and verses 7, I want to read 7 through 10. Matthew 3, 7 through 10, But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to him, coming to where he was, he, that is Jesus, said to them, You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance, and do not think you can say to yourselves, We have Abraham as our father.

I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. Now listen to Luke chapter 3 and 7 through 9. John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance, and do not think you can say to yourselves, We have Abraham as our father.

I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. In both of those you have John the Baptist, I

think I said Jesus with Matthew, but both of those you have John the Baptist speaking to the Pharisees, and note that assuming that the English translation that I just read captures the Greek text in both cases, note that the wording was identical, not only in the words quoted, but even some of the just the narrative itself.

Now when scholars have read something like that, it raises the question, how do we explain that? How do we explain the similarities between Matthew, Mark, and Luke? Again, John is very different, but Matthew, Mark, and Luke, how do we explain the differences? Again, not by the fact that they just record the same events and in the same order at times, but the wording is nearly identical. How is that supposed to be explained? Well, most New Testament students have tried to explain that due to some kind of relationship, that either, for example, one explanation is that Matthew, Mark, and Luke probably had access to the same source, or the same perhaps even oral tradition. That is, they're all three relying on the same body of information that has been passed down to them.

That's one possibility. However, the fact that the wording is so close has led scholars to posit a literary relationship between the three. Sometimes we talked about the fundamental view of inspiration several sessions ago.

Some would say it's because they're inspired that they all three write similarly. The problem is that doesn't account for some of the differences that one finds between Matthew, Mark, and Luke. So how do we explain this? The most popular view is a source critical one.

That is, that one of the synoptics, Matthew, Mark, or Luke, functioned as the source for the other two. That is, two of the Gospel writers are borrowing from the other one. And that's given rise to a number of theories that I don't intend to go into a lot of detail.

But a very popular one early on that is still, I think it goes all the way back to Augustine, and is still argued for by some today, is that Matthew was written first. And that Luke and Mark then borrowed from Matthew, utilized Matthew as their source. Now obviously, especially Luke has a lot of material that's not in Matthew, and Mark has a little bit of material not in Matthew.

And Luke has a lot of material you don't find in Mark. So obviously Luke added information. If you go back to chapter 1, 1-4, where he is aware of eyewitness accounts and other documents, Luke obviously includes some of his own material that is not in Matthew or Mark.

But that was a very common explanation. Matthew wrote first, Mark and Luke utilized Matthew. And there have been some other theories as well.

But what I want to focus on just briefly is the most common explanation that probably most New Testament scholars and students hold to is what is known as Markian priority. That is that the Gospel of Mark would have been the first one written, and Matthew and Luke would have both utilized Mark, independently of each other. So we're not to picture Matthew and Luke sitting together, both utilizing Mark, but independently of each other, Matthew and Luke would have had a copy of Mark, and would have used that Gospel as the basis for their own.

Again, you find Matthew and Luke including a lot of information not in Mark. Matthew has a lot of parables that you don't find anywhere in Mark. Luke has a lot of number of parables that you don't find in Mark or Matthew.

Both Matthew and Luke have the Sermon on the Mount. You don't find that anywhere in Mark. So the theory is Matthew and Luke both use Mark, but also

included other material that, according to Luke, may have come from other written documents and sources, and probably came from eyewitness testimonies as well.

And if the authorship of Matthew is Matthew, Jesus' disciple, then no doubt Matthew would have seen many of these events himself, and witnessed them himself. So most agree, then, that Mark was written first, and Matthew and Luke would have utilized Mark. A couple of the reasons for that is when you compare the three, most of the Gospel of Mark, almost all of it, appears in both Matthew and Luke.

Whereas if you assume that Matthew was written first, then Mark ends up deleting a lot of material out of Matthew, because Matthew's quite a bit longer, and includes a lot more material. So do you see if Mark, if Matthew was written first, and Mark utilized Matthew or Luke, then he must have left out a lot of material. But if Mark is written first, then it stands to reason that most of Mark, not all of it, but most of it, would be picked up in Matthew and Luke.

And that's one of the arguments for the priority of Mark. A couple of other arguments is Matthew and Luke, at times, appear to be smoother than Mark. Where Mark might be a little shorter or rougher in the grammar, or the way he records things, Matthew and Luke appear to be smoother, and the suggestion is it's more likely that Matthew and Luke would have smoothed out places in Mark they thought was rough.

Or sometimes it appears that Matthew and Luke might be clearer theologically. That is, some areas where Mark might say something that could be misunderstood theologically, regarding Christ's deity or something like that, the person of Christ. Matthew and Luke appear to smooth that out.

Matthew and Luke almost never, when they're both referring to Mark, or when they both parallel Mark, they never seem to deviate from that, or deviate from each other in the way they refer to Mark. So again, my purpose is not to mount an argument, but simply demonstrate why some scholars think that, and which again has emerged as probably the most common view of the relationship between Matthew, Mark, and Luke, is a source-critical view that posits Mark as the original source. Mark was the first gospel written and functioned as a source for Matthew and Luke.

Matthew and Luke then would have had access to Mark and utilize most of Mark in the production of their own gospels. Again, they both had access to other material and other sources through eyewitness accounts. And again, as tradition has it, the Gospel of Matthew was indeed written by Matthew, the disciple of Jesus.

And just one important aside, the titles given to the gospels, the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of Mark, Gospel of Luke, those were not originally part of the documents. Those were added later on by the Church as an attempt to identify who the authors of those gospels were. And if those are reliable, and I think you can make a good case that they are, if those are reliable, then again, Matthew would have no doubt drawn on his own eyewitness experience of Jesus' life and Jesus' teaching.

But they no doubt would have had access to other material that they would have also included. One other interesting thing to say, just to fill out the picture so that if you see this terminology, you know what it's doing, is you'll often find New Testament students referring to Q, the Q source. Basically what that is, Q is simply the first letter of the German word for source, and it's a word used to describe and refer to the material that Matthew and Luke have in common, but you don't find in Mark.

Such as, for example, both Matthew and Luke have an account of Jesus' birth, but you don't find it anywhere in Mark. Mark jumps right into John the Baptist and into Jesus' early ministry. But both Matthew and Luke have an account of the birth and very early childhood of Christ.

Luke has a little bit more than Matthew does on Jesus' very early childhood. Both Matthew and Luke have an account of the Sermon on the Mount. Mark does not.

And sometimes that material is very close in wording again, so that many New Testament scholars think that Matthew and Luke also had access to another source that they have labeled Q. So Matthew and Luke use Mark, but they also had access, according to this view, to another document. Some would say it's a document, others would say we don't know if it was a document or not, but still the letter Q stands for the material that Matthew and Luke have, such as the Sermon on the Mount, but you don't find in Mark. So Q would be a more hypothetical source that they think Matthew and Luke had access to.

But based on all of this again, most would conclude Mark was the first gospel written and then Matthew and Luke utilized Mark, but also other material, perhaps this Q, whatever it is, whether it's a specific document or a body of teaching and information that both Matthew and Luke had access to and then utilized that in their own teaching. Again, sometimes scholars get a little creative by suggesting a community that created Q and a situation even locating geographically where it may have come from and the theology of Q and the situation it was addressing, which kind of piles speculation upon speculation. We're not even sure the Q was an actual document or not, so that sometimes this kind of thing can run rampant or run awry a little bit.

But the synoptic gospels, as I've just explained, seem to have been the primary beginning point and entry point of source criticism into the New Testament. And that's again because of the similarities between the synoptic gospels, it required an explanation and most are convinced that there's a literary relationship. One of them provided the source for the others.

And again, the common one is Mark was written first and was the source for the other gospels. Source criticism though has actually spread outside of just the synoptic gospels. Although sometimes when you read treatments of Old Testament, of New Testament source criticism, you can get the impression that the only place that can happen is in the synoptic gospels.

I've read a number of articles on source criticism that don't talk about source criticism outside of the synoptics, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. But others have ranged more broadly and suggested that other New Testament authors may be reliant on sources. So for example, some have suggested in Paul's epistles that at times he may also be using pre-existing sources or material.

Two of the most prominent and well-known examples, though debated, occur in two of Paul's letters, one of them Colossians and the other Philippians. I'll read the more common one perhaps and more well-known one from Philippians chapter two. But Philippians chapter two, right in the middle of the chapter contains this well-known Christ hymn where Paul says, Who being in the very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, and being found in the appearance of as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on the cross.

Therefore God highly exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Now interestingly, even in the English translation that I'm looking at, and not all English translations do this, but the English translation I'm looking at sets these verses up in sort of poetic fashion, in verse form. And some have perhaps reflecting the fact that some think Paul may be quoting a pre-existing hymn.

Now there's debate, some are convinced no, Paul wrote this himself, but others think he may be borrowing a hymn that was already circulating and utilized in the early church. The other text, the other classical text, is Colossians 1:15 through 20, that I will not read now, but the other well-known Christ hymn that some speculate may be an early hymn that Paul himself is quoting. Again, one that was utilized by the church and circulating in the early church, and now Paul uses it as a source for his own composition.

Again, it's difficult to tell, and scholars debate whether that is indeed the case. The other possible source, another example of a possible source critical issue in the New Testament is the relationship between 2 Peter and Jude. When you read 2 Peter and Jude, it becomes clear that they contain material that is very similar, almost to the same extent that Matthew, Mark, and Luke are similar in both order and content, but also wording.

So there's been debate as to what might be the relationship, for example, between 2 Peter and Jude. One common theory is that Jude was written first, and the author of 2 Peter then utilized the material in Jude in his own composition, but also included other material. Again, most think it's because most of Jude is subsumed in and taken

up in 2 Peter, so they think it's more likely that 2 Peter would use Jude and include almost all of it than it is Jude would use 2 Peter and leave a lot of it out.

So source criticism goes beyond merely the synoptics, but other scholars have explored the possibility of written sources, sources behind other parts of New Testament text. One final example in the New Testament that might be fruitful for source criticism as far as its ability to reveal interpretive insight is one of the more difficult passages, I think, in the New Testament, and again my purpose is not to try to solve it or provide a detailed explanation, but the well-known passage in 1 Peter chapter 3, the very end of chapter 3, starting with verse 18, in it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water. And I'll stop right there, but that passage has caused a number of New Testament students to pull their hair out in trying to explain what is going on and what exactly Christ is doing.

One explanation that has been given is that the author of 1 Peter is drawing on the story, the apocalyptic works, apocalyptic works like Revelation and Daniel, but one apocalyptic work in particular that seems to have been well known, though it's not included in Scripture, again an apocalyptic work being a visionary, a narrative account of someone's vision, someone ascends to heaven and sees heavenly visions and predictions of the future, etc., in highly symbolic language. One well-known apocalypse that is not in the Old or New Testament was the book of 1 Enoch, and in the Enoch literature you find a number of references to the story of Genesis chapter 6, the story of the flood, that begins by describing the sons of man coming down and co-inhabiting with the daughters of men, the sons of God coming and co-inhabiting with the daughters of men. In 1 Enoch, that is understood as a reference to angelic beings that left their place of authority, and now they are pictured as because of what the angelic beings did in Genesis chapter 6, in the days of Noah, they are now pictured as being imprisoned in darkness and awaiting the day of judgment.

And some would suggest that is the source or the background for what we read in this text I read from 1 Peter chapter 3, and some would suggest Peter had access to 1 Enoch and his telling of, and his interpretation of the story of Genesis 6. So what that means then, interpretively, is we wouldn't have to worry too much about what is going on in this text literally and where all these things are taking place, but according to that explanation, Peter might just be drawing on a common apocalyptic account or story in order to demonstrate Jesus' victory over the powers of evil. Again, my purpose is not to adjudicate on that interpretation at this point, but simply to give an example of how source criticism might make a difference in how one reads the text, and to demonstrate how source criticism, even in the New Testament, ranges outside of only the synoptic Gospels. Again, two observations by way of evaluation.

One I've already mentioned, number one, one of the dangers I think in source criticism is, at least the way some interpreters use it, is at times the approach can be speculative, especially when we don't have the source available, especially when we're trying to reconstruct it. It might be a little bit easier in writings like the synoptic Gospels, although even there we have to be careful as far as placing too much weight on any theory of a relationship, but it appears certain that one of the Gospels functioned as a source for the other. But on the other hand, at times when we don't have the source available, sometimes it can be speculative to suggest that a writer was drawing on a source and made this or that change, or even to go into detail as to where that source might have come from, the date, the setting, the theology of that source.

And that is related to my second observation. At the end of the day, we still have to deal with the text as we have it. Even if New Testament and Old Testament authors were reliant on previous sources, which they were, and however much an understanding and reconstruction of those sources might help us understand what's

going on, such as I think the first Peter 3 text is a good example of that, at the same time we still have to deal with a final text.

An author has taken those sources and put them in the form of a text to communicate his purposes. That now starts to get us into another criticism that I've already mentioned, that is redaction criticism, that will begin to focus more on the final product and the text and what the author has done in putting it together. So sometimes source criticism can be a great help in identifying the sources that may have contributed to the author's own composition and to understand to see how the author has used those.

But on the other hand, we must avoid speculation and we must ultimately focus on the text as it stands. Now, source criticism historically, especially in New Testament studies, but historically and logically, source criticism then kind of gave way to or gave a place to the emergence of another form of criticism known as form criticism. Basically, form criticism is like source criticism an attempt, at least partially an attempt, to get behind the written document of the New and Old Testament, to recover, uncover the individual forms, especially oral forms, that have made their way into the final composition.

So what form criticism often does, it looks at the documents and isolates forms and tries to trace their oral history. How, where did this form develop? Looking at individual units in the text, individual forms. Given what I find, can I determine the setting of that form and how that form developed that now results in what I find in the Old and New Testament text.

So you can see a form criticism often has different facets. It can study the individual forms in the text, the individual units and their form and their shape and their function, but it can also study the original setting of that form and its oral tradition

and its development up until the time it was included in the text. So that's why I say form criticism also is in some respects an historical endeavor in that it often tries to uncover the oral period of the form's transmission up until the time it was included in the written text.

As we're going to see though, probably the most fruitful aspect of form criticism, I think, is to isolate, not isolate, but to identify the individual units and forms within the text and what they are and how they function and how they make a difference in interpretation. But let me give you some examples again from both the Old and New Testament as far as form criticism and how it might work. And again, my goal is not always to necessarily suggest I agree with these examples or to evaluate them, but just to demonstrate how source criticism or form criticism can work.

In the Old Testament, form criticism developed most prominently in the Psalms where a journal scholar called Herman Gunkel was able to identify certain forms of the Psalms and classify them and discuss their setting and their function and things like that. One common approach to form criticism in the Old Testament, and actually there's a number of interesting and at times helpful commentaries called *Forms of Old Testament Literature* that follow an approach of identifying four features of a form. That is, looking at the structure of the form, how it's put together and how it's structured, then looking at the genre, what kind of labeling the form, what are we dealing with, what kind of form is this? Then looking at the possible setting of the form, what setting would have given rise to a form like this? And we'll give an example in just a moment.

And then the intention, what is the function or purpose of this form? What is it trying to do? For example, let me give you an example from a common form that we use in the United States, and I'm sure this is true elsewhere also, and that is a grocery list. Looking at those four features, if I take a grocery list, you'll note the structure of it,

the grocery list has a unique structure. It doesn't include narrative and explanation, usually it's simply a list of items that again may have very limited explanation, but it's just a list of items with very little grammar, or again, no prose or narrative, but just a simple list at times very long of items.

The genre then of such a structure would be a grocery list, that would be the label, the genre label that we give to this kind of form that simply gives a list of items that one would purchase at a grocery store, especially food items. The third thing, the setting, the setting of a grocery store. As I'm going to the grocery store, I will create a list, and so the setting is a trip to the grocery store to purchase groceries for the coming week or month or whatever.

And then finally, the intention is simply to remind me what to purchase when I get to the store. And so similarly, forms can be treated like that or examined like that, even in the Old New Testament. So for example, for the psalms, it's nothing new that there are different types of psalms.

Even at a very basic level, you learn that there are psalms of praise, there are psalms of lament, etc., etc. A very common psalm, and these psalms all emerge within the worship life of the nation of Israel and were utilized in various settings. A very common psalm is a lament, a psalm of lament.

It has a very common structure, most of them have a common structure, beginning, number one, with an invocation to God. Number two, the lament itself, which is basically a description of how bad things are or have gotten. Then number three, an expression of confidence by the psalmist.

Number four, a petition. And then five, often ending in a vow, where the psalmist makes a promise to God for answering his prayer. Another interesting type of psalm is what is known as the entrant psalms.

There's an example of that in Psalm chapter 15. Although, again, there's a number of those, Psalm chapter 15, I think, provides an interesting example of an entrant psalm. It begins, Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart, has no slander on his tongue, who does his neighbor no wrong and casts no slur on his fellow man, who despises a vile man but honors those who fear the Lord, who keeps an oath even when it hurts, who lends his money without usury and does not accept a bribe against the innocent.

He who does these things will never be shaken. And notice how this psalm is structured. It begins with a question by the worshiper in number one, Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live in your holy hill? And then the rest of the psalm in two through five is an answer to that question in the form of stipulations for entrance into the sanctuary and entrance to God's holy hill.

The setting for this then may be the actual arrival at the temple of the worshipers as they came to worship God. And so the intention then would be to stipulate the requirements for those who would approach the temple in order to participate in worship. Another common form that you find to move outside of the psalms, but you find this particularly in prophetic literature, is what is known as an Old Testament call narrative, which you find particularly at the beginning of some of the prophets.

But there's another intriguing example in the early chapters of Exodus in the life of Moses. A prophetic call narrative basically was an account of God appearing to and confronting an individual in Israel's history, a prophet or someone like Moses, and

commissioning them and calling them for service. And it took on an interesting and there seems to be a common structure when you start comparing the call narratives.

You find one in Isaiah chapter six. You find another one in Ezekiel chapters one and three. You also find, as I just mentioned, you find one in the first three chapters of the book of Exodus as well, where God appears to individuals and calls and commissions them for service.

Now, the structure of the Old Testament call narrative seemed to include most of the all or most of the following. Number one, a confrontation with God, where God would confront and God would appear to the person. The second one would be the commission of God, where God actually commissions or calls the prophet or person for a certain activity or certain service, followed by number three, the objection of the prophet.

So you remember Isaiah, woe to me, I'm a person of unclean lips. Even more extensively in the Exodus account, when God commissions Moses, he comes up with a series of responses, a series of objections, not just one. The objections then are followed by an assurance by God, number four, that overcomes the objection.

And then number five, a sign is given. And especially Moses' call in Exodus one through three includes all of those. What is interesting then, this suggests that Moses' commission is the commission of a prophet.

Moses is being seen as a prophet who is now being called and commissioned by God. The setting then perhaps would be the ancient requirement for messengers to show their credentials. And then the intention of the prophetic call narrative then would be to authenticate the prophetic message and activity.

So everything that Moses does and says, everything that Isaiah does or says, or everything that Ezekiel does, now receives validation or now receives authenticity because it goes back to a call narrative, a commission by God. So those are examples of how form criticism can work in a number of Old Testament texts by identifying the discrete forms and looking at their structure, what the genre of the form, what their setting might be, the setting that might have given a rise to such forms, and then the function or intention of those forms can be illuminating when we look at and try to understand biblical text. In the New Testament, form criticism seems to have developed a little bit differently than it did in the Old Testament.

But also the form criticism in the New Testament usually was associated, it had three facets. And form criticism in the New Testament, much like source criticism, developed, first of all, had its start in the Gospels, especially Matthew, Mark, and Luke in the Synoptic Gospels. And form criticism was often more closely tied with issues of historicity, the historicity of the Gospels, the historicity of the sayings of Jesus and the things that he did.

But in the Gospels, form criticism included, especially in its start in the Gospels, three different facets. Number one, the form criticism focused on the forms, the discrete forms that one finds in the Gospels, and scholars then would label the different forms such as, they would create labels such as a pronouncement story, a story told about something that Jesus did or said that climaxes with a saying or a pronouncement, or miracle stories, or sayings of Jesus, or prophecies, or proverbial sayings, or discourses. Those were all typical labels given to different forms found throughout the Gospels.

So the first stage of form criticism was to locate and identify and label the different forms found in the Gospels. For example, in Mark, Mark chapter 2, and verses 15 through 17, I think this is the text I want, Matthew chapter 2, 15 through 17. While

Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, and his disciples, for there were many who followed him.

When the teachers of the law, who were Pharisees, saw him eating with sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples, why does he eat with the tax collectors and sinners? On hearing this, Jesus said to them, it is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners. This is usually classified by scholars as an example of a pronouncement story.

Notice this brief story that ends with a pronouncement or saying of Jesus, and usually with this form, the focus then becomes on the saying that climaxes the story. So the first goal of form criticism in the New Testament, especially in the Gospels, was to identify and label the different forms. The second feature of form criticism was to identify the *Sitz im Leben*, which is the German term meaning the setting in life.

That is, the setting that gave rise to the form, and usually the setting was something in the life of the early church. What event or what situation in the life of the early church would have given rise to this form, would have created this form? The assumption is this form was useful for something. The assumption is that the authors were not just writing bare history, but the forms demonstrated that this literature was useful for something in the life of the early church.

So the attempt was to not only identify and label the form, but also to identify the setting, something in the life of the early church. It's worship, whether it's conflict with false teaching, or with Judaism, or something that some setting in the church, the teaching of the church that gave rise to this form. And then finally, the third element of form criticism was the history of transmission.

That is, the oral stage. This form, again, would have been given a rise to, would have arisen in some setting in the early church, but then would have been passed along orally up until the time that it gets included in the biblical text. And so form criticism studies this oral stage.

It studies the changes that are made, the development of this form up until the inclusion in the biblical text. It traces the transmission of these forms. Probably out of these three, for biblical interpretation and hermeneutics, the most fruitful of these three, I think has been number one, the ability to identify the form and to not just label it for the sake of labeling it, but to identify the form in a way that is helpful for interpretation and for understanding the biblical text.

For example, if I identify something as a pronouncement story, the focus of that, the focus of my interpretation will be on the climactic saying. That will be the kind of the punchline of the main point. Another interesting facet of identifying forms and form criticism is it helps us to make sense of larger sections of biblical text.

For example, in Matthew chapters 8 and 9, Matthew chapter 8 and 9, it seems to be a lengthy section that has been arranged not so much chronologically according to the order in which the events occur, but chapters 8 and 9 seem to be arranged based on a common form, that is miracle stories. All of Matthew chapter 8 and 9 is simply a series of miracle stories so that form criticism seems to provide the rationale for how Matthew 8 and 9 have been arranged. In the next session, I want to continue to discuss and talk about form criticism.

Just briefly, we'll wrap that up and look at an example from the parables and the gospels and how that form criticism might help us come to grips with how the parables function and how we can read them. Then we'll move on to the third form

of criticism in kind of this triad that has historically and logically developed, and that is redaction criticism.