

Dr. Robert C. Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Lecture 5, Book Characteristics

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We're continuing our Synoptic Gospels course here. So far, we've looked at Unit 1, the historical Jesus; Unit 2, the Jewish background to the New Testament; Unit 3, Introduction to Exegesis, and something about the narrative genre; and then a look at Matthew 2, the Visit of the Wise Men. And then, last time, we got started on Unit 4, Authorship and Date of the Synoptics.

In fact, we covered Authorship and Date of the Synoptics, but I also have a pretty long section on Characteristics of the Synoptic Gospels. So that's where we want to pick up right now. Characteristics of the Synoptic Gospels, and we'll do them as we did before.

Characteristics of Matthew, Characteristics of Mark, Characteristics of Luke. So, Characteristics of Matthew. Let's think a little bit about Matthew, the author.

And the answer is, we don't know much about him. He's mentioned by name seven times in four different books of the New Testament, but these really involve only two occasions—one, his conversion, and two, the Apostle Lists.

As he's called in the Apostle 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, 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. Matthew was a tax collector, and after his conversion, he held dinner for his old friends so that they could meet Jesus. 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 Matthew 10:3 is the only one using the terms public and tax collector. The other three lists, Mark 3:18, Luke 6:15, and Acts 1:13, just list him.

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 7 or Disciple 8, 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 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, Jesus Christ, rather than his title, which any of the Jews would have recognized was just the Greek translation of Messiah, anointed one if you like.

Matthew's gospel tends to assume a knowledge of Jewish practices rather than explain them. Mark tends to explain them, for instance, and that again suggests that his principal readers in view are Jews and Jewish Christians. So, in Matthew 15:2, we have the tradition of the elders about washing hands; Mark gives three or four verses of explanation, but Matthew doesn't.

And then in Matthew 23:5, the gospel writer says, they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels. Even the NASB finds it necessary to expand that so that the Gentile readers of the 20th-21st century can understand it, and so they add a parenthesis, lengthen the tassels, parenthesis of their garments, and unparenthesis. Well, to show their piety, some Pharisees wore bigger phylacteries and longer tassels than the average person.

I remember meeting an Orthodox Jew over in Israel, and the person had these tassels hanging out over his belt, etc. So, that still goes on today in some Orthodox Jewish circles. In Matthew 23-27, the scribes and the Pharisees are described as like whitewashed tombs.

And the Jews, of course, would recognize that illusion because they would whitewash 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, they tended to whitewash the tombs right before the festivals.

So, it seems that Matthew is writing for Jews and Jewish Christians—aim and structure of Matthew. Matthew gives no direct statement in his gospel of his aim, so we can try to infer the aim by looking at the contents of the gospel.

The contents suggest that Matthew's purpose is to show Jesus as the Messiah who fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies. Matthew cites more prophecies, and a wider variety of them, than any of the other gospel writers. Matthew also appears I think I mentioned 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've called my Son, that in Hosea is applied to Israel, of what Matthew says, and there's a parallel there with Jesus as well. Jesus' use of scripture at the Temptation, where 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 to figure out something about what Matthew is doing is to look for internal evidence of structure.

In general, when we're working with biblical writers, and for that matter with other writers as well, we should try to find out how the writer would have outlined his material had he provided us with an outline. And so, how do we go about that, rather than making arbitrary guesses of some sort? This will give us then a more accurate view of the book's structure.

Well, there are two possible passages that look like transition passages in Matthew. Both begin with a phrase. After that, Jesus began something else. One's in Matthew 4:17. After that, Jesus began to preach.

If you look at the contents of the Gospel, it begins Jesus' ministry to the multitudes. Before that, we've been looking at the genealogy and birth narratives and Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, and now this begins the ministry to the multitudes. So, transition from the preparatory narratives to Jesus' public proclamation of the Gospel.

Then, further on, in Matthew 16:21, Jesus began to show his disciples. And this begins what's generally called Jesus' private ministry to the disciples, and in a sense, it outlines the rest of the book. He's 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 over at the other, at the back end, if you like, Jesus' private ministry to his disciples, his suffering and death and resurrection. There are a number of discourses in the Gospel of Matthew, and more of them and longer than in Luke and Mark.

Mark, except for the Olivet Discourse, has only very short materials. Usually there are five discourses seen in the Gospel of Matthew. This goes back, I'm not sure how far, but back to Godet's introduction to the New Testament anyway.

They all end with a similar formula. It came to pass when Jesus had finished, or something, and then 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.

It came to pass when Jesus had finished, and it goes on with the following narrative: 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.

In chapter 18, we have the church discipline material and his discourse to his disciples, and then in 19:1, we have a transition passage. In chapters 24 and 25, we

have the Olivet Discourse, and in chapter 26, verse 1 is the closing formula on that. A number of interpreters 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 the question is, what do you do with Genesis? And the others don't seem to me to be particularly impressive in that direction. So, yeah, there are five discourses, but it's not immediately obvious that that's what they're really 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, preparation, and then Sermon on the Mount might work as Exodus or something, but I'm not sure you can carry that too well. The wilderness temptations even could be seen as the wanderings perhaps, though that would then bring that after that's on the wrong side of the Sinai giving the law 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, 25, but there looks like there's a big shift when you go into 25 in the eschatological material going on there. Then also, there's a discourse in Matthew 3, but that's a discourse of John the Baptist, so again, I 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 who Jesus is, and to attempt to get these samples to fit the Pentateuch seems to me to be rather stretched, but that Matthew uses fairly big chunks, whereas Mark uses very short pieces, and Luke uses different kind of pieces, if you like. I think that's fairly clear. Some have suggested that Matthew was involved in shifting his materials chronologically and gathering them by theme rather than by chronology.

His discourses are, as we said, admittedly, by topic, and his miracles are mainly concentrated in chapters 8 and 9. On top of that, we can say 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 and 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 a different order, though there are complications.

The questions in looking through the gospels of whether these two events seen in two different gospels are the same event or whether they are different events. Your liberals have often claimed that there was really only one cleansing of the temple, but John, for some reason, or Synoptics, for some reason, put it at different ends of Jesus' ministry. Of course, you've also got the miraculous catch of fish, which in John is at the end of Jesus' ministry, and the Synoptics at the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

My read on those is that some of those are things that are done over again. There are some others that we're not so sure about, but 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 it's probably two different ways of condensing the same sermon, but I might be wrong because Jesus' itinerant preacher, if you like, not quite in the form of visiting different churches like our itinerant preachers do, but more like Wesley or somebody that speaks in the open in different places.

So, he may well have used similar material in different places. That would not be at all surprising in that case. 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, it should not be surprising that sometimes Jesus' words sound somewhat different in one gospel writer than another. Of course, to invent dialogue that never occurred should be viewed as bad in any culture, and I think that's correct.

When you're condensing a long speech or a long narrative, a writer might use key sentences from a discourse, 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, and he may not, however, tell us what he's doing. That just makes the narrative longer and complicates things in one way or another.

My read on this is that the gospels are thoroughly reliable. They tell us what happened, etc., but without a time machine, we might not be able to figure out exactly how to harmonize all the particular incidents, nor tell for sure whether these two healings of leper are actually the same event or two different occasions of that. Moving on, we're still describing the characteristics of Matthew and 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 filaments are also noted in other gospels, but not as many as in Matthew.

Some liberals have suggested that a book of testimonies, which is a compilation of Old Testament proof texts about the Messiah, was used in the early church. Well,

this might be so, but it's more likely that these go back to Jesus' own explanation. 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 fulfillment remarks such as Matthew's, and then the citation of various Old Testament passages in Paul and Peter are, in fact, a reflection of what Jesus told them at that time. And he, of course, of all people, would know what Old Testament prophecies were actually designed to point to the Messiah and such. The other characteristic phrase in Matthew is the kingdom of heaven.

And this phrase occurs over 30 times. Although there are some who disagree, I think this phrase is synonymous with the kingdom of God. What we find is that Mark and Luke never have the kingdom of heaven, and Matthew almost always has the kingdom of heaven, but occasionally will have the kingdom of God, etc.

Matthew's kingdom of heaven is used in a lot of the same context as Mark and Luke's kingdom of God. And Matthew actually has one passage where he uses both terms in parallel. That's Matthew 19, verses 23 and 24.

Some light is shed on this by knowing some of the rabbinic literature. In rabbinic sources, we find that the rabbis were reluctant to use the term kingdom of God. And so, they would often use replacements for that.

And one of those replacements was heaven. One of those was glory. One of those was the place.

And various other things of this sort. And so, it appears then that Matthew, as a pious Jew, is using the kingdom of heaven rather than the kingdom of God most of the time. Some other materials in Matthew are unique to Matthew and, therefore, characteristic in that sense.

We already mentioned that Matthew refers to various Jewish customs and usages that would perhaps not be especially interesting to Gentiles. Matthew and Luke both have birth material, but some of it is distinctive 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, the flight to Egypt, etc. Luke doesn't mention those at all. It appears to me that Matthew gives us Joseph's perspective, and Luke gives us Mary's perspective.

In Matthew, we see Joseph wondering, worrying, and acting while Luke says Mary pondered these things in her heart, etc. And 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 in the church in John 16, church discipline in Matthew 16, and church discipline in Matthew 18. Well, let's see.

I would suggest that this raises some sort of problem for that 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. Ekklesia, upon this rock, I will build my church in Matthew 16. Ekklesia is a Septuagint term.

It's a term that's used for the congregation, and so it's often a translation of a call from the Hebrew congregation. But of course, Jesus does speak here of my ekklesia. So, is that to be distinguished from the Old Testament ekklesia? Not explained.

Then there's the Great Commission in Matthew 28. A commission also appears in Mark, though that one is in a somewhat questionable text, but 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 implication of going 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, predict 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 tend to question Matthew's authenticity in 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, baptizing in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, versus the early baptism in the name of Christ, etc.

Perhaps both of those are over-reading the passages to suggest that you're getting the 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 and resurrection are certainly news of earth-shaking importance.

Psalm 22 says as 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, I think, relate largely to emphasis.

The early disciples were apparently waiting for further instructions on how to go about this and did not at first realize that Gentiles would become Christians as Gentiles without converting to Judaism. We probably misread both Matthew and Acts in taking the phrases in the name of the Father, 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. Okay, I give a sketch outline here of 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 1, then the birth and infancy that brings us to the end of chapter 2, then preparation for ministry, which takes us through all of 3 and part of 4, and then the Galilean ministry runs from middle of chapter 4 to the end of chapter 18, and can divide up into public ministry, middle of 4 to the beginning of 13, and then a limited ministry for about 3 chapters, and then a private ministry for about 3 chapters. This is followed then by the journey to Jerusalem, which takes up about 2 chapters, 19-1 to 21-1.

Then, the last week, and that's about 5 chapters, and then the betrayal, trial, and crucifixion take up 2 chapters, and then the post-resurrection appearances take up 1 chapter. So, basically, Matthew has just the Galilean ministry. We'll see something similar with Mark, whereas Luke has a Parian ministry, and John has a good deal on the Judean ministry as well.

Here already, the last week through the resurrection takes up 8 chapters of a 28-chapter book, so a big, big section on the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, if you like. Okay, we're going to move on to the characteristics of Mark, and as we did with Matthew, we'll start out 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, 6 times in Acts, so that's where we get most of his material, and then 3 times in the Pauline Epistles, 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 the sheet at the arrest incident, so that's why 10 or 11 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 Barnabas. I think the KJV has nephew. The word is actually cognate to nephew, *onepsios*, but it's 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, which we say 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.

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 said to be speculation. A possible story suggests how that would work is the Last Supper 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. 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 will try at various locations, perhaps. Mark awakens. A mob arriving at the house is likely to do that.

Follows the mob at a distance, wrapped in his bedsheet all the way to Gethsemane, watches the arrest from the bushes, and almost gets caught himself. Speculation, okay, but a little picture. 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 144 AD or shortly before, based on information we have in Josephus about the time of 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 *huperitas*, originally meant an under-rower in 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 world, certainly compared with Paul or 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 or something and didn't want to go into the new territory or something.

See Acts 13:13. The estimated date for that is perhaps 47-48 AD. Whatever the reason was, Paul didn't think it was a good reason.

Some possibilities have been suggested on why Mark might have abandoned them. One might be that 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, by God, obviously.

Then thereafter, Paul is mentioned first. It's possible that Mark was irritated by this. We don't know.

I was guessing here. Reconstructions, if you like. Secondly, the possibility of going into Asia Minor was a changed plan, and Mark did not want to go that long.

Thirdly, Mark opposed the aggressive evangelization of the Gentiles, which is then going to begin to take place. Or he became fearful of the danger, disillusioned, or homesick. So, all of those are possibilities, and again we're speculating.

No time machines, remember. After the Jerusalem Council, Paul and Barnabas planned a second missionary journey to visit the churches they had established. You see this 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 went to Cyprus, and Paul and Silas became mature Christian heads 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 10 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 in 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. And Timothy is to bring him along when he comes from Ephesus. In 1 Peter 5:13, 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'd suggest it's maybe 64 later. And it seems to me that Peter is warning the Asian churches about this persecution, perhaps warning Paul's churches even about this, which may suggest perhaps Paul is off in Spain or something of that sort. Mark is with Peter in Babylon and sends his greetings.

Peter calls him my son, presumably in the spiritual sense. We have no indication that Peter is the father of Mark and Mary is Peter's wife or something. I suppose one could construct something of that sort.

Where's Babylon? Where's this Babylon? Well, there is a literal possibility that in the area in 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's a place in Egypt near modern Cairo that was called Babylon. I don't know the history of how it got that name, but 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, and 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 scriptural material. 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 that is unfamiliar with the languages and culture of Palestine. People are clearly Gentiles. From tradition and perhaps from the Latinisms we may also infer that these Gentiles were Romans.

I would take that not to be strong but certainly a possibility. There are several Latinisms that use Latin terms but put in the Greek alphabet if you like that occur in the Gospel of Mark. There's a pergola in Mark 15:15, which means to whip or such with a flagellate, which is actually the verb that has been borrowed into English from the Latin flagella.

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, some of their terms had come over. You can certainly find that sort of thing happens with an occupying army for 50 or 100 years, and a number of terms become common in the local language if you like. One that is a little more distinctive is the centurion, which occurs three times in Mark 15 from the Latin centurion, and that doesn't seem

surprising to us because we have it borrowed into English as well, but Matthew, Luke, and Acts use the Greek equivalent *hectone arcase* leader or ruler over 100 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. 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 intends to preserve the traditions of Peter, for instance, or that he intends to present the Gospel to Romans or Gentiles, for that matter.

The opening line, of course, may very well state the aim of 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'd call a distinctive aim, but clearly, it's the aim of Mark in that sense that this is the good news about Jesus, who is the Messiah and who is the Son of God. Well, perhaps Mark, as has been suggested by some commentators, is aimed especially at the Roman mentality as compared with the Greeks anyway, and you, of course, could compare them with the Hebrews and the Syrians 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's kind of the direction that goes 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. Thus, there may have been a high demand for his material among the Romans, as our tradition from Clement says.

Well, characteristics of Mark. We mentioned these briefly back earlier when we were discussing authorship and date. There's a 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 5,000 reclined on the green grass. Well, that wouldn't sound like anything in England or eastern U.S. or something of that sort, but the grass is only green during the year in that part of the world.

So, it is really kind of telling you something. Mark notes Jesus' emotion. He uses the historical present frequently to, we think, add life to the narrative.

That's at least been a common suggestion on what the historical present does in the Greek. A lot of detail in Mark. Mark is shorter than Matthew, Luke, or John, but he often reports incidents with more detail than do Matthew or Luke.

He sometimes gives the names of the people involved, the time of day, and the surrounding crowds mentioned, and these things are frequently not found in the other Gospels. Yet, as I said, Mark is the shortest Gospel. This shortness is obtained by omitting long discourses and reporting fewer events.

Activity. Another feature of Mark is the activity in the Gospel. The action in Jesus' ministry is emphasized.

The Greek word *euthus* immediately is often translated that way. It's used over 40 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, Mark 13, the Eleventh Discourse, is the longest speech in Mark's history. Mark is packed with miracles.

Eighteen are recorded, though only two are unique to Mark. So that's characteristic, then. Vividness, detail, activity.

Aramaic. Many Aramaic words are recorded and usually translated into Greek. Some of these Aramaic words are unique to Mark.

Boanerges, the F that Jesus gives to the two sons of Zebedee, means sons of thunder. Talitah kum, Mark 5:41, the command to Jairus' daughter, a little girl, arise. Ephatha, 7:34, the command to the death mute, be opened.

Bartimaeus is named the blind man, which just means son of Timaeus. Mark even translates the Aramaic name Bartimaeus, which suggests that the audience has no feelings for Aramaic whatsoever. There's Abba, 14.36, Jesus addressing God, meaning father.

That's 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. Korban, 7:11, gift to the temple, which is explained in Mark, but not translated in Matthew, 27:6. Golgotha, 15:22, place of a skull.

Both Matthew and John use this, and all three translate it. Eloi, Eloi, lama subachthani, 15:34, my God, my God. Matthew uses it and also translates it, as does Mark.

Rabbi Rabboni used a number of times in Mark four times, Matthew four times, and John nine times, but only translated once, and that 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 Syrophenician woman and with Pilate imply that he had knowledge of Greek. Well, now I'll give a sketch outline of Mark, and let me walk you through that one again. We're looking at a considerably shorter gospel than Matthew by chapters.

Matthew has 28 chapters, and Mark only has 16. Preparation for the ministry in Mark only takes part in 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 into public, limited, private, or something like that.

Then you have the journey to Jerusalem, which takes up a chapter, chapter 10. The last week takes up three chapters and about 10 verses, 11:1, 14:10. Then you've got the betrayal, trial, and crucifixion takes up only two chapters, less than two chapters, and the resurrection, one chapter, and of course, with the question of the last 12 verses of Mark, only eight verses for the post-resurrection materials.

So that's the gospel of Mark. Move on to try to do the same thing now with Luke. Characteristics of Luke.

Luke, the physician. Luke is mentioned by name only 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. That he was a faithful companion of Paul even to the very end in Rome. 2 Timothy 4:11 runs up to the end in Rome. And he was apparently Gentile rather than Jewish.

I have some zealous people who say that all of the New Testament is composed of 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 when he is to Colossae. And Paul breaks those into two groups.

He says in the middle of that, these are all of those from the circumcision that are with me. And then he goes on to the latter group. It's clear that the people ahead of that are Jewish.

At least a couple of them are clear. He says that for the whole group. Luke is in the latter group.

He's in the uncircumcised group, if you like. In addition to these, we have just three references to Luke by name, and we have what we call the wee passages in Acts. These are 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 missionary journey.

After Paul received the vision to go to Macedonia, we, perceived, etc. us, etc. picks up there and so on through that eight first passage.

The group then consists of Paul, Silas, Timothy, and the author. The use of we starts in verse 10 and ends in verse 17, and that's geographic. They're doing some traveling then.

It would imply that the author joined the group at Troas and left them at Philippi. Then, in Acts 20, verse 5, wee passages pick up again, and they run on to 21.18, so over a chapter. This is on third missionary journey.

The usage is more spotty throughout this section, but note that the wee begins in Philippi. So, it ended a few years earlier in Philippi and now picks up 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 came back through Philippi.

It goes on from Philippi and ends in Jerusalem. Perhaps the author is a delegate for the Philippian church who takes gift money to Jerusalem. He does not name himself, however, in the list of delegates unless he is not Luke.

It looks like Luke's practice is not to name himself in the gospel, in the book of Acts. The third wee passage is in Acts 27:1-28:16, The Voyage to Rome. This is now two more years later.

The wee 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 to Jerusalem and then met him two years later in Caesarea for the two years between the third missionary journey and his fourth journey to Rome. my suggestion is perhaps he used this time to research the gospel materials that he wrote up. When I was back there doing the dating of Luke, my suggestion was he researched the material for the gospel.

Luke wrote it up and had it ready before they left for Rome, and it began to circulate in the East. He may have lost his copy in the shipwreck, but we don't know that, so

that might explain why the gospel circulates later in the west than it does in the east. That's all guessing, huh? We also have one we passage of uncertain text that's in Acts 11:28, which 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 wee may reflect just an early tradition that Paul was originally from Antioch or if some have suggested that Codex Biza and the western family of manuscripts represent in Acts a slightly different edition of Acts we don't know that then it may be even Luke's own remark that he was present at Antioch when Agabus showed up there.

Liberals tend to discount the force of these wee passages by saying that the author of Acts, whom they think is not Luke, used a diary and extracted the wee passages as direct quotes. This is not the most natural interpretation of the phenomenon, but those things 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 belonged to the so-called Hippocratic School.

Most of us perhaps have heard it at one time or another, the Hippocratic Oath, the oath that physicians used to take. I'm not sure if they still do 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, 4th century BC, and Galen, 2nd 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, which is distinct from many of the other methods of doing medicine in antiquity, and were noted for diagnosis by observation and deduction.

A rather important, what shall we say, medical movement in the Greco-Roman world was in the temples of the healing god, Aesculapius, Aesculapius in Greek, and Aesculapius in Latin, and their method of diagnosis was by divination. But the Greek Hippocratic School, diagnosis 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 them 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 and lists of symptoms and treatments helped to build experience or at least showed what not to do in various kinds of cases. The Hippocratic School was also noted for simple treatments. They used some herbal drugs; they used diet, they used to rest, and 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. MacMillan and his grandson, David Stern, I believe, on none of these diseases. A good discussion of the Bible contrasted with some of your more exotic ancient medicine. The Hippocratic School was also noted for pretty high standards of hygiene.

Well, it looks like Luke probably had this background. It seems that he ended up 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, he gave a number of medical terms that he gave in his healing miracles if you like. Okay, here are 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 Antioch scattered throughout the world, but the famous one is the one there in Syria, which, as I say, fits that variant that shows up in the Western text of the New Testament. Well, Luke's use of the term Hellenist in Acts 11.20 apparently refers to pagans rather than Jews.

And it may be that Luke means by Hellenist someone who was not Greek racially but who adopted a Greek culture. And that would fit with lots of different towns, but it would fit well with Antioch, where you had lots of Syrians who had adopted Greek culture, and so were Hellenists, but they weren't Hellenistic Jews, okay? So, you've got this problem of whether to translate Hellenists or Greeks in that particular passage in 11:20. Hellenists is definitely harder to read. 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 no particular reason for that. Paul would obviously have used his associates to help him work with his early churches and such. Ramsey also goes on rather speculatively to claim that Luke was the cause of Paul's Macedonian vision.

You see a little bit of a rationalistic approach here in Ramsey, that Paul had met Luke, and so dreamed about him that night and went over to Macedonia with him, etc. I would say this idea seems rather unlikely, though Luke does appear suddenly in the narrative at Troas. If Luke is from Antioch, then apparently, he either meets Paul accidentally in Troas or perhaps has been sent out by the Antioch church to try and find Paul and perhaps bring 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, which states that the brother mentioned in that verse could be translated as his brother. Here's what the passage looks like in the NASU.

Paul says, We have sent along with him, and he's been referring to Titus just before. We sent along with him the brother whose 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 never mentioned in Acts.

He suggests that this is similar to the phenomenon we see in the Gospel of John, in which the author never mentions himself or his brother James. Souter then suggests that Luke minimizes all references to himself and apparently feels that references to his brother would call attention to him as well. Well, that's, again, pretty speculative since Paul refers to other people as brothers and frequently uses the term spiritually.

Well, that brings us to the question of Luke's aim and method. 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 to whom, in the first case, he's writing the Gospel of Luke, to know the certainty or reliability of the things he has been taught. So, Theophilus apparently has been taught at least the basics of the Christian faith. So, Luke's aim, given in the prologue, Luke 1: 1-4, written in Greek, of an even more classified, careful, Hellenistic style than his usual writing.

The prologue is compressed in comparison with other prologues and other histories of the time, but then he's writing a one-volume history, and Josephus is writing a seven-volume or a twenty-volume history or something of that sort. However, the prologue gives the same information and serves as a dedication to explaining how and why the work was undertaken. Liberals are nervous about the term reliable as it implies that someone tried to write as accurate a history of Jesus as was possible in about AD 60.

If Luke succeeds, then liberal theology is down the drain. Most excellent, used as a title for Theophilus, is a title given to government officials. Such usage is seen in the Book of Acts and also seen in several other ancient Greek book dedications.

For instance, the writings of Galen and the early Christian epistle to Diocletus both have that kind of thing as well. Theophilus may or may not be a Christian. His name is what we call a theophoric or God-bearing name, Theophilus, a lover of God, and so some have said, well, it's just an allegorical name, for I'm sending this book out to all those people who love God.

Possibly, an allegory is 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 Old Hebrew and Old Testament and of Hebrew names of that sort in the New Testament as well. We actually have a number of God-bearing names in the New Testament that are obviously real names as well.

There are three of them in 1 John, Gaius, which apparently connects with Gaia, the Earth Mother, and Diotrephes, nourished by Zeus, Deus Trephe, and what's the other one? 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.

But anyway, that's two of the three of them there. So, we can't really very well argue that this person is imaginary merely on the basis of the etymology of his name. Presumably, in any case, Luke had a wider circulation in mind for this gospel.

His intended wider audience is probably educated Gentiles. So, he writes in a rather nice style and is writing 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 up accounts. Well, what's that about? Well, as far as canonical gospels are concerned, there couldn't have been more than two written at this time.

John is certainly later, and Luke is writing a third one if you like. So, what does many mean? It probably does not refer to canonical gospels at all but rather refers to the fact that the apostles had been traveling around, first in Israel and then over the eastern part of the Roman Empire. People were excited about what they were saying and tried to write up what Peter or Paul or somebody else was saying in a particular place.

And hearing only a bunch of anecdotes, I'm not able really to put together anything very satisfactory because they don't have enough information or connections. And that's my suggestion of what's going on there. Luke says that he had carefully studied all related materials himself.

He says he studied them from the beginning, which is probably a reference to the subject matter rather than Luke being with Jesus from the beginning. It's possible, but I think it's 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 the available data later.

The usual historical method turns out to be studying the available data later just because not that many people are on the scene, typically in a particular thing. So, Luke is doing this, but Luke, we see thirdly, used materials delivered by a group designated as eyewitnesses and ministers of the word. These people would obviously include the apostles and other full-time workers, such as perhaps the 70 or so who were also eyewitnesses.

The use of a single definite article for the two terms indicates that the group is viewed as a unit that has both qualifications. I won't push that too hard, but he's seeing this as one group together. Luke probably interviewed many people who were healed or who were present on various of the occasions that he narrates.

My suggestion is that Luke also may have interviewed Mary since the Luke and birth material has Mary's perspective. It's possible that she's still alive in the 50s, perhaps being 70 or 80 years old by that particular point. Then Luke tells us that he wrote up an orderly, sequential, accurate account, and that should be an encouragement to Christians.

Obviously, all such claims as the above make liberals again rather nervous. This gospel we're told is written in Greek by trained intellectual Gentile who had personally investigated the accounts of eyewitnesses. Rather striking.

So, the general way to get away from that is to say, well, all writers throw stuff like this in the front of their material. But where Luke is testable, he has proved to be quite impressive—some characteristics of Luke.

Emphases of Luke's gospel. There are a number of features we can say that seem to be emphases of Luke's gospel. I'm going to mention here universalism.

This is not in the sense of the Unitarian Universalist church, where everybody's going to be saved, but in universalism. 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, Luke emphasizes Jesus' gracious attitude towards 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 any of the other gospels.

Luke has considerable emphasis on social relationships, especially an interest in wealth and poverty. Why did Luke stress these particular relationships? We don't know. We're not there.

Perhaps because these would appeal to his audience. The Greek philosophers of the New Testament period, as opposed to the early Greek philosophers, Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, etc., were very much concerned with ethics. Many cultured Greeks of the period were also interested in ethics and were unhappy with what they saw accurately, I think, as the debauchery of Rome and the high-handed running over of the poor people and such.

So, that may be what we see going on here. As we sketch some material unique to Matthew, so we sketch some material that's unique to Luke here. Luke, first of all, and somewhat surprisingly, has a much more Gentile gospel, if you like, than Matthew, preserves some Semitic praise psalms.

These are, in fact, very Semitic, though 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 and represents even a kind of a Hebraistic way of naming books and works and things of that sort. So, there's the Magnificat in Luke 1:46-55.

Mary is concerned about how she'll be received at Elizabeth's house and she's received very well because Elizabeth already knows about what has been revealed secretly to Mary and John the Baptist jumps in her womb at the greeting of Mary. So, Mary praises God and Magnificat, the Latin for praise, okay, I praise. Then there's the Benedictus, Luke 1:68-79 where Zechariah praises God after John's birth and the Gloria of Luke 2:14, the words of the angels at Jesus' birth, Glory to God in the highest, etc.

This is actually a little short to be technically a psalm but would fit nicely with the kind of refrains that frequently occur in the psalms. And then there's, fourthly, the Nebuchadnezzar now let depart in Luke 2:29-32 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's gospel is not distinctive in having parables in it all three of the synoptic gospels have parables and the Gospel of John has what are 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 meaning as a two level often even a secular story here and then a spiritual significance that it has.

The wheat and the tares would be typical of such a thing earthly agricultural story of an enemy of a landowner trying to get back at him by messing up his crop and yet it conveys information on the progress of the gospel. And then illustrative parables are also called example parables or paradigm parables these are unique to Luke there's one possible candidate in Matthew, Matthew 12:43-45 and there's definitely an Old Testament parallel to it but these do not transfer meaning from physical to spiritual or secular to religious or something. 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 Adam and falling among thieves, he's ambushed by Satan and Jesus is the Good Samaritan and the church is the inn and he works out some sacramental uses of the oil and such, the wine but the context itself indicates I think that it's in fact a sample of what it means to be a neighbor what it means to act as a neighbor towards someone and the answer to the Pharisees question who is my neighbor? The answer is anyone who is in need and the principle is go do likewise. So, a nice example of a sample parable. A sample of this particular disastrous incident of how to be a neighbor if you like.

Another example is the rich man of Lazarus a 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 and suggests that when they die their statuses are reversed 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 the death Lazarus is feasting at Abraham's bosom just like John at Jesus' bosom at the Lord's Supper. The former rich man is outside begging if you like. Well, there are people who want to make that into a story parable witnesses definitely do so they can get rid of the idea of hell and conscious existence between death and the resurrection, etc. Pharisee and publican 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 host has invited somebody more important than he and so he gets bumped out and by the time all these other seats are taken 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 the rich guys will pay you back not all your friends will pay you back but the poor people who can't pay you back and so what's going to happen then? Well, God will pay you back a whole lot better, huh? Why is this 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's no reason to believe that in such 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 emphasized this material because he especially appreciated it. Its 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, is the narrative of the Parian ministry. Paria, largely Jewish region east of the Jordan River, probably largely populated with Jews after the 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 that will 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 anything quite like that.

Maybe the inscription on the front of Mark, the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, if you like Got birth and infancy, which parallel at least in structure and location that in Matthew, but includes the infancy birth and infancy of John as well and then the preparation section has got the genealogy in it Matthew's got his genealogy up at the front Then we have Galilean ministry and that takes up middle of chapter 4 to about the end of chapter 9 and then has a big section, ten chapters of the journey to Jerusalem and the Parian ministry the other ones all have a better chapter for the journey to Jerusalem and don't explicitly mention the Parian ministry Luke's got about three chapters, two chapters on the last week and two chapters on the betrayal trial and crucifixion and one chapter on the resurrection and in those areas parallels the other Synoptics very strongly.

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