

# Dr. David Mathewson, Hermeneutics, Session 10, Source and Form Criticism Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

## **1. Abstract of Mathewson, Hermeneutics, Session 10, Source and Form Criticism, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

This lecture excerpt from Dr. Mathewson's hermeneutics course explains source criticism, a method for identifying the original written sources used by biblical authors. The lecture uses examples from the Old Testament (Chronicles and Kings; Genesis) and the New Testament (Synoptic Gospels; Pauline epistles; 2 Peter and Jude; 1 Peter) to illustrate how source criticism works. It also touches upon form criticism, which examines the oral traditions and forms that shaped biblical texts, and briefly introduces redaction criticism, which focuses on the final edited form of the text and the author's intentions. The lecture cautions against excessive speculation when using these methods, emphasizing the importance of interpreting the final text.

**2. 14 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Mathewson, Hermeneutics, Session 10 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Introduction & Languages → Introductory Series → Hermeneutics).**



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### 3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided lecture excerpts on source and form criticism:

#### Briefing Document: Source and Form Criticism

##### Introduction:

This document summarizes key concepts discussed in Dr. Dave Mathewson's lecture on source and form criticism, two methodologies within the broader field of historical criticism applied to biblical interpretation. The lecture explores how these methods seek to understand the origins and development of biblical texts by examining underlying sources and forms, respectively.

##### I. Source Criticism

- **Definition:** Source criticism aims to identify and reconstruct the written sources that biblical authors used in their own compositions, "a methodology that attempts to get behind the text and to uncover the written sources, the documents that authors utilized in their own compositions." It operates on the assumption that biblical authors often relied on earlier written materials.
- **Motivations:** The method developed from observations of both Old and New Testament texts where authors appeared to draw on pre-existing documents, sometimes explicitly. The goal is to understand the development of the text and potentially gain insight into the author's purpose by understanding their sources.
- **Old Testament Examples:**
  - **Chronicles & Kings:** The books of 1 & 2 Chronicles are shown to be likely drawing from 1 & 2 Kings as a source. The lecture highlights the near identical wording in 1 Chronicles 17 and 2 Samuel 7 as clear evidence of this.
  - "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... You probably recognize that language that I just read from another text, and that is Second Samuel Chapter 7"
  - **Genesis & the Pentateuch:** The creation narratives in Genesis 1 & 2 reveal differences in style, order, and names for God, leading some scholars to propose multiple sources (e.g., the JEPD theory). The theory posits that the Pentateuch is

a composite of four sources: the Yahwist (J), Elohist (E), Deuteronomist (D), and Priestly (P) sources.

- "They've also noted the different names used for God in chapters 1 and 2, and because of that... 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."
- **Hypothetical Nature:** The lecture stresses that while source relationships seem clear in Chronicles and Kings, positing JEPD in the Pentateuch is more speculative as we don't have access to these proposed documents. "When it comes to the Pentateuch, though, this is more hypothetical. No one has access to the existence of J-E-P-R-D..."
- **New Testament Examples:**
- **Synoptic Gospels:** The strong similarities in content, order, and wording among Matthew, Mark, and Luke strongly suggest a literary relationship. The lecture uses the example of John the Baptist's address to the Pharisees in Matthew 3 and Luke 3 to highlight how closely the texts align.
- "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... note that the wording was identical, not only in the words quoted, but even some of the just the narrative itself."
- **Markan Priority:** The most widely accepted theory proposes that Mark was the first gospel written, and Matthew and Luke then used Mark as a source while also incorporating other material (including possibly a source called Q).
- "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."
- **The "Q" Source:** The lecture explains that "Q" refers to a hypothetical source containing material found in Matthew and Luke, but not in Mark, such as the Sermon on the Mount.

- "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."
- **Other Potential New Testament Sources:** Some scholars suggest Paul might have used pre-existing sources, such as hymns in Philippians 2 and Colossians 1, and that 2 Peter drew from Jude. The passage in 1 Peter 3 is analyzed as possibly drawing from extra biblical apocalyptic works like the book of 1 Enoch.
- "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... 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."
- **Evaluation of Source Criticism:**
- **Speculation:** A potential danger of source criticism is that it can become overly speculative, especially when the purported sources are not extant. Reconstructing hypothetical sources can lead to questionable reconstructions of their dates, settings and theology. "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."
- **Focus on the Final Text:** While source criticism can be valuable, interpreters should not neglect the final form of the text, "At the end of the day, we still have to deal with the text as we have it." Understanding the author's use of their sources is essential and that leads to the next level of criticism.

## II. Form Criticism

- **Definition:** Form criticism moves beyond written sources to examine the individual forms, often oral forms, that may have been incorporated into the final text. It attempts to trace the origins and development of these forms, looking at their original function, setting and transmission. It is another approach to "get behind" the written text to understand its origins.
- "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."

- **Goals:** Form criticism studies individual units in the text, their form, structure, function, setting, and oral history. It can reveal how a form developed prior to its inclusion in the written text.
- **Old Testament Examples:**
  - **Psalms:** Hermann Gunkel pioneered form criticism in the Psalms, identifying different types (e.g., laments, praise, entrant psalms) and their characteristic structures, settings, and purposes.
  - "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."
  - **Call Narratives:** Form criticism analyzes the structure and function of prophetic call narratives (e.g., in Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Exodus), recognizing common elements such as God's confrontation, a commission, the prophet's objection, God's assurance, and a sign. This analysis highlights the prophetic nature of Moses' call in Exodus.
  - "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."
- **Key Elements of Form Analysis:**
  - **Structure:** How the form is organized.
  - **Genre:** The type or category of the form.
  - **Setting (Sitz im Leben):** The social context or situation that gave rise to the form.
  - **Intention:** The purpose or function of the form.
  - **Example:** A grocery list provides a familiar illustration of how these four elements apply to a common form.
- **New Testament Examples:**

- **Gospels:** Form criticism was initially applied to the synoptic Gospels to understand the different forms found within them. The lecture uses a pronouncement story from Mark 2 to demonstrate the analysis of such forms.
- "For example, in Mark, Mark chapter 2, and verses 15 through 17... 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."
- **Common Gospel Forms:** Scholars have categorized many types of forms, such as pronouncement stories, miracle stories, sayings of Jesus, prophecies, proverbial sayings, and discourses.
- **Three Facets:** New Testament form criticism focuses on the forms, the settings (Sitz im Leben) in the life of the early church, and the oral history or transmission of the form.
- "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... The second feature of form criticism was to identify the Sitz im Leben... And then finally, the third element of form criticism was the history of transmission."
- **Value of Form Criticism:**
- **Interpretation:** Identifying forms helps interpreters understand the function and main point of particular passages. If it's a pronouncement story the climax is a focus.
- **Textual Organization:** Form criticism provides insight into how larger sections of biblical texts are arranged, like Matthew's use of miracle stories in chapters 8 and 9.
- "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."

**Conclusion:**

Source and form criticism represent important methods for exploring the historical context and development of biblical texts. Source criticism investigates the written materials authors drew upon, while form criticism seeks to understand the oral forms and traditions behind the written text. Both methods contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the Bible, though they must be used carefully, avoiding excessive speculation, and always respecting the text in its final form. These criticisms have set the stage for the emergence of redaction criticism, which focuses more on the finished form of the text.

## 4. Mathewson, Hermeneutics, Session 10, Source and Form Criticism

### Source and Form Criticism: A Study Guide

#### Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is the primary goal of source criticism?
2. How does the book of Chronicles relate to the books of Kings in terms of source criticism?
3. What is the JEDP theory, and to what part of the Old Testament does it primarily apply?
4. What is Markan priority and why is it the most common theory?
5. What is the "Q" source and what type of material does it contain?
6. Besides the Synoptic Gospels, where else do scholars look for source material?
7. What are some potential problems that arise in source criticism?
8. What is the goal of Form Criticism?
9. How does form criticism analyze a text, especially in the Old Testament?
10. How did form criticism begin in the New Testament, and what are the three facets?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. The primary goal of source criticism is to identify and reconstruct the written documents or sources that biblical authors used when composing their texts. It seeks to get "behind" the final form of the text to understand the materials that contributed to its creation.
2. The book of Chronicles appears to utilize First and Second Kings as a source. The author of Chronicles takes material from Kings and adapts it for their own specific purposes, reinterpreting it for their readership.



3. The JEDP theory proposes that the Pentateuch is composed of four distinct sources: J (Yahwist), E (Elohist), D (Deuteronomist), and P (Priestly). This theory suggests that a later editor combined these separate sources into the Pentateuch.
4. Markan priority suggests that the Gospel of Mark was the first gospel written, and Matthew and Luke independently used Mark as a source. This view is supported by the fact that most of Mark appears in both Matthew and Luke, while assuming Matthew as the first gospel would mean Mark left out a lot of content.
5. The Q source refers to hypothetical material that is found in both Matthew and Luke but not in Mark, such as the Sermon on the Mount. Scholars believe this source was used by both authors and could be either a written document or a body of oral tradition.
6. Beyond the Synoptic Gospels, scholars have explored the possibility of source material in other parts of the New Testament such as Paul's epistles, where potential pre-existing hymns or traditions are believed to have been used, and the relationship between 2 Peter and Jude, which seems to have some literary dependence.
7. Some potential problems of source criticism include the speculative nature of reconstructing hypothetical sources, especially when those sources are no longer available. It is also essential to deal with the final text as it is, not only hypothetically reconstructed sources.
8. Form criticism seeks to identify and understand the various literary forms (e.g. pronouncement stories, laments, parables) within biblical texts, often with the goal of understanding the original settings and purposes of these forms, particularly in their oral stages.
9. In the Old Testament, form criticism often looks at four features of a form: the structure, the genre, the setting, and the intention or function of that form in its original context. This approach helps to understand the purpose and usage of the form within its historical or literary context.
10. In the New Testament, form criticism began in the Gospels, and it typically has three facets: identifying and labeling the forms, finding the "Sitz im Leben" or setting in the early church, and then tracing the history of transmission during the oral stage of the material.

## Essay Questions

1. Compare and contrast source criticism in the Old and New Testaments. Discuss the methods, aims, and potential limitations of each.
2. Explain the significance of both source and form criticism as methods of studying the Bible, and provide examples to illustrate your points.
3. Discuss the historical development of source criticism, from its early applications to the JEDP theory to its application to the Synoptic Gospels.
4. How does form criticism contribute to our understanding of the Gospels, and what does this say about how we should interpret them?
5. Assess the validity of each the source and form critical approaches and their implications for biblical interpretation and theology.

## Glossary of Key Terms

**Source Criticism:** A method of biblical study that attempts to identify and reconstruct the written sources that biblical authors used when composing their texts.

**Redaction Criticism:** A method of biblical study that focuses on how an author has taken up and adapted their sources, focusing on the final product and the author's intentions in putting it together.

**JEDP Theory:** A theory suggesting that the Pentateuch is made up of four distinct sources: J (Yahwist), E (Elohist), D (Deuteronomist), and P (Priestly).

**Markan Priority:** The theory that the Gospel of Mark was the first gospel written and served as a source for Matthew and Luke.

**Synoptic Gospels:** The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which share a significant amount of material and are studied together due to their similarities.

**Q Source:** A hypothetical source containing sayings of Jesus that is believed to have been used by the authors of Matthew and Luke but not included in Mark.

**Form Criticism:** A method of biblical study that aims to identify and classify different literary forms in the biblical text (e.g., parables, pronouncement stories, psalms) and understand their original setting (Sitz im Leben) and function.

**Sitz im Leben:** German phrase meaning "setting in life," referring to the historical and social context in which a particular form or tradition originated in early church history.

**Pronouncement Story:** A story in the Gospels about something Jesus did or said, usually leading to a climactic saying or pronouncement.

**Lament:** A psalm that expresses grief, complaint, and a plea for God's help or deliverance.

**Call Narrative:** A literary form often found in prophetic books where God appears to a prophet, commissions them for service, and gives them a message.

## 5. FAQs on Mathewson, Hermeneutics, Session 10, Source and Form Criticism, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### FAQ: Source and Form Criticism

- **What is source criticism and what is its primary goal?**
- Source criticism is a methodology used in biblical studies that attempts to identify and analyze the written sources that biblical authors may have used in the composition of their texts. Its primary goal is to uncover or reconstruct the documents that lie behind the current biblical texts we have. This involves identifying passages where authors appear to be drawing from earlier writings, even if those sources are no longer extant, and understanding how they use these sources for their own purposes.
- **How does source criticism work, and what are some examples from the Old Testament?**
- Source criticism works by comparing different texts for similarities in wording, content, and order, to suggest a literary relationship between them. For example, in the Old Testament, the relationship between 1 & 2 Chronicles and 1 & 2 Kings is often cited. The author of Chronicles appears to draw directly from Kings, adapting it to their purposes. The creation accounts in Genesis 1 and 2 and the JEPD theory are further examples. Scholars have posited that these represent multiple sources (J, E, P, and D), which were later combined into the final version of the Pentateuch.
- **What is the "Synoptic Problem" and how does source criticism address it?**
- The "Synoptic Problem" refers to the literary relationship between the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. These three gospels have a striking degree of similarity in content, order, and even wording, which suggests some kind of interdependency. Source criticism addresses this by proposing that one or more of the Gospels may have served as a source for the others. The most common theory is that Mark was written first, and that Matthew and Luke both used Mark as a source, while also adding unique material.

- **What is the "Q" source, and how does it relate to source criticism and the Synoptic Gospels?**
- The "Q" source is a hypothetical written document that scholars believe was used by both Matthew and Luke, in addition to the Gospel of Mark. "Q" (from the German word "Quelle", meaning source) is inferred from material that is present in Matthew and Luke, but is absent in Mark, such as the Sermon on the Mount. The "Q" source is theorized to explain the shared material between Matthew and Luke beyond their shared use of Mark, suggesting it was an additional source both authors drew upon. It is important to note that "Q" is a hypothetical source that has not been discovered.
- **Does source criticism apply only to the Gospels?**
- No, while source criticism is often associated with the Synoptic Gospels due to their clear similarities, its application extends to other parts of the New Testament, including the Epistles. Some scholars posit that Paul, for example, may be drawing from pre-existing hymns, such as those found in Philippians 2 and Colossians 1. Additionally, the relationship between 2 Peter and Jude is often examined using a source critical approach.
- **What are the limitations of source criticism?**
- Source criticism, while helpful, has limitations. A key limitation is that it can sometimes become speculative, especially when reconstructing hypothetical sources for which we do not have physical evidence like J, E, P, D, and Q. Additionally, there's the risk of getting overly focused on the hypothetical sources that may obscure the final form and message of the text. The focus should be on the actual final text we have. Reconstructing sources, dates, and settings, though interesting, can be speculative and distract from the ultimate message of the text.
- **What is form criticism, and how does it differ from source criticism?**
- Form criticism, unlike source criticism, attempts to get behind the written text and explore the individual forms, often oral, that have made their way into the final composition. While source criticism focuses on written documents, form criticism looks at the types of units in the text (e.g., pronouncement stories, miracle stories, psalms of lament) to understand the context of their development and function. Form criticism seeks the oral history of these literary forms, how they were transmitted before being put in written form.

- **How does form criticism analyze texts, and what are its typical methods?**
- Form criticism analyzes texts by examining four main features of each unit: (1) the structure of the form, how it is put together; (2) the genre, or label given to the form; (3) the setting in life ("Sitz im Leben"), or the social or historical context that gave rise to that form; and (4) the intention of the form, which is what the form is meant to achieve. For example, a psalm of lament is analyzed based on its common structure of invocation, lament, expression of confidence, petition, and vow. In the Gospels, form criticism identifies different forms (miracle stories, sayings, etc.), their original setting in the early church and their oral transmission up to the inclusion in the Biblical text. This approach can help us understand how these texts were used and their purpose in the early Church.