

# Dr. Dave Mathewson, New Testament Literature, Session 12, Gospel Themes, Introduction to Acts Resources from NotebookLM

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

## 1. Abstract of Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 12, Gospel Themes, Introduction to Acts, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

**Dr. Mathewson's lecture focuses on summarizing the themes within the Gospels and introducing the book of Acts.** The lecture emphasizes the unique perspective each Gospel offers on Jesus Christ, rather than combining them into a single narrative. **Mathewson highlights key aspects of Jesus's portrayal in each Gospel, such as Matthew's depiction of Jesus as the new Moses, and Luke's emphasis on Jesus' compassion for outcasts.** He also addresses common themes emerging from all four Gospels, including Jesus's humanity and concern for community. **The lecture then transitions to the book of Acts, explaining its role in bridging the Gospels and the Epistles by showing the continuation of Jesus's ministry through his followers.** The structure of Acts, particularly in relation to Isaiah's prophecies, is also explored. **Finally, he prepares students for an upcoming exam**

**2. 29 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 12 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Daniel).**



**Mathewson\_NTLit\_Session12.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 12, Gospel Themes, Introduction to Acts

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from Dr. Mathewson's New Testament Literature Lecture 12, focusing on Gospel themes and the introduction to Acts.

#### **Briefing Document: New Testament Literature Lecture 12**

**Subject:** Gospel Themes & Introduction to Acts

**Source:** Excerpts from "Mathewson\_NTLit\_EN\_Lecture12.pdf"

**Date:** November 6, 2024 (approximated)

#### **Overview:**

This lecture serves as a wrap-up of the Gospels section of the course and a preliminary introduction to the Book of Acts. The lecture emphasizes the unique perspective of each Gospel writer and transitions into a discussion of Acts and its role in bridging the Gospels to the Epistles. The lecture concludes with a review of the upcoming exam.

#### **I. Gospel Themes: Unique Portraits of Jesus**

- **Main Idea:** The New Testament presents four distinct Gospels, not a single harmonized account of Jesus' life. Each Gospel offers a unique perspective on Jesus' identity, purpose, and message. It is important to understand each Gospel individually before attempting to combine them.
- **Quote:** "The Church has allowed four Gospels to stand in our canonical Scripture... I've simply tried to give you kind of a taste for what is unique about each of the Gospels."
- **Key Concepts: Distinct Emphases:** Each Gospel writer highlights different aspects of Jesus' life and ministry.
- **Complementary Perspectives:** The Gospels are not contradictory, but rather offer complementary viewpoints on Jesus.
- **Avoiding a Blunted Voice:** Combining the Gospels too quickly can diminish the unique contribution of each author.

- **Examples of Gospel Emphases:****Matthew:** Jesus as the new Moses, teacher, Son of God, descendant of David, fulfillment of the Old Testament, with an emphasis on the inclusion of Gentiles.
- **Mark:** Jesus as a balance between humanity and deity, the suffering servant.
- **Luke:** Jesus as Savior, Son of David, having compassion for the outcasts of society.
- **John:** Jesus as the Passover Lamb, the Word (Logos) of God, clearly portrayed as the Son of God and God himself.

## II. Key Themes Emerging from All Four Gospels:

- **Main Idea:** While each Gospel has a unique perspective, certain themes emerge when considering all four Gospels together. The lecture focuses on themes that might be overlooked.
- **Four Key Emphases:****Jesus' Humanity (Avoiding a Docetic Jesus):****Concept:** Emphasizes Jesus' real, tangible human experience, in contrast to the Docetic heresy that claimed Jesus only *seemed* human.
- **Quote:** "But it's in the Gospels that we find the full humanity of Jesus disclosed."
- **Examples:** Luke's description of Jesus growing in wisdom and stature; Jesus' statement that he doesn't know the hour of his return; Jesus' emotional prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane.
- **Jesus' Compassion for Outcasts (Avoiding a Popular Jesus):****Concept:** Highlights Jesus' willingness to associate with and care for those rejected by society.
- **Quote:** "Jesus was willing to boldly cross lines socially and economically and reach out and have physical contact with and relationships with those who were social outcasts, those on the fringes of society."
- **Note:** This often brought Jesus into conflict with the religious establishment.
- **Jesus' Concern for Stewardship (Avoiding a Wealthy Jesus):****Concept:** Focuses on the dangers of wealth and the importance of placing trust in God rather than material possessions.
- **Quote:** "What Jesus is really against is the hoarding of wealth, and trust in wealth."
- **Note:** Jesus does not say wealth is sinful but warns against making it the primary object of trust.

- **Jesus' Concern for Community (Avoiding an Individualistic Jesus):****Concept:** Highlights Jesus' creation of a community of disciples that would carry on his work.
  - **Quote:** "Jesus in all his Gospels makes provision for a community of followers that will carry on the work that Jesus began to do."
  - **Note:** The choice of 12 disciples symbolizes the formation of a new Israel. The New Testament knows of no Christian who is outside of the community.
1. **(Additional):** God's Grace (Avoiding a Legalistic Jesus):
    - **Concept:** Jesus didn't just come to give a new law or a means of earning one's way to salvation, but graciously offered salvation and graciously made provision for his people to follow him in obedience.

### III. Introduction to Acts:

- **Main Idea:** The Book of Acts bridges the Gospels and the Epistles by showing how Jesus' work continued through his followers after his ascension.
- **Key Concepts: Acts as a Sequel:** Acts follows Luke's Gospel as the second part of a two-volume work (Luke-Acts).
- **Transitional Role:** Acts provides a transition from the narrative of Jesus' life to the letters written by his followers.
- **Key Figures:** While not centered on one figure like the Gospels, Acts introduces key figures like Peter and Paul, who then become authors of Epistles.
- **Outline from Acts 1:8:Quote:** "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
- This verse outlines the geographical expansion of the Gospel message, starting in Jerusalem and spreading outward. This is in fulfillment of the prophet Isaiah's program for how God would restore his people
- **Fulfillment of Isaiah:** Jesus' instructions to his disciples in Acts 1:8 echoes prophecies in Isaiah regarding the restoration of Israel and the spread of salvation to the ends of the earth.
- The Holy Spirit coming upon them in fulfillment of Isaiah 32.
- They will be his witnesses in fulfillment of Isaiah 43.

- The disciples were to be witnesses to the ends of the earth in fulfillment of Isaiah 49.

#### IV. Exam Information:

- **Format:** Multiple choice.
- **Scope:** Covers background material and the Gospels. Does *not* include material on Acts.
- **Emphasis:** Comparing and contrasting the Gospels, understanding main themes and emphases.
- **Study Guide:** Available on Blackboard, includes a study key.
- **Chart Suggestion:** Create a chart comparing the Gospels across categories like author, structure, key passages, view of Jesus, and main emphases.
- **No Dates:** No specific dates will be required, however, being able to understand the order the Gospels were written is encouraged.

This briefing document should provide a solid overview of the lecture's key points. Remember to consult your notes and the study guide on Blackboard for a comprehensive review.

## 4. Study Guide: Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 12, Gospel Themes, Introduction to Acts

### Gospel Themes and Introduction to Acts: A Study Guide

#### Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. Why did the early Church choose to include four distinct Gospels in the New Testament canon, rather than a single, unified account?
2. How does Matthew's portrayal of Jesus connect him to the Old Testament figure of Moses?
3. In what ways does Luke's Gospel emphasize Jesus' compassion and concern for outcasts?
4. What is the significance of John's depiction of Jesus as the "Logos" or "Word"?
5. Explain the concept of Docetism and how it relates to the portrayal of Jesus in the Gospels.
6. Describe two examples from the Gospels that demonstrate Jesus' full humanity.
7. How did Jesus challenge the prevailing social norms by associating with marginalized individuals?
8. What does Jesus teach about wealth and material possessions in the Gospels?
9. How does Jesus redefine the community of God's people, in contrast to the Old Testament understanding?
10. How does Acts 1:8 provide an outline for the book of Acts, and what Old Testament prophet's program does it echo?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. The early Church recognized that each Gospel provides a unique and complementary perspective on the person and ministry of Jesus. By allowing four distinct accounts, the Church preserved a richer and more complex understanding of Christ than a single, harmonized narrative could offer.
2. Matthew portrays Jesus as a "new Moses" by highlighting parallels between their lives and roles. Jesus, like Moses, delivers God's people (now from sin) and

provides authoritative teachings (like the Sermon on the Mount), echoing the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai.

3. Luke's Gospel emphasizes Jesus' compassion by showing him actively seeking out and ministering to the marginalized. He demonstrates concern for the poor, the sick, women, and other outcasts, challenging societal norms and offering them acceptance and healing.
4. John's depiction of Jesus as the Logos (Word) signifies that Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God to humanity. He is the divine reason and creative principle through which God communicates and interacts with the world, making God visible and knowable.
5. Docetism was an early heresy that denied the full humanity of Jesus, claiming he only *seemed* to be human. This view stemmed from a belief that the divine could not be genuinely united with the physical and therefore Jesus only appeared to experience human limitations.
6. One example is Luke's account of Jesus growing in wisdom and stature as a child, indicating a process of learning and development. Another is Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, where he expresses human anguish and reluctance in the face of his impending suffering and death.
7. Jesus challenged social norms by interacting with those considered "unclean" or "sinful" by religious authorities, such as tax collectors and lepers. He disregarded ceremonial laws in order to demonstrate compassion and offer forgiveness, causing controversy and conflict.
8. Jesus warns against placing one's trust in wealth rather than in God, emphasizing that material possessions are temporary and can become a distraction from true faith. He advocates for generosity, stewardship, and recognizing that true treasure lies in a relationship with God.
9. Jesus redefines the community of God's people by shifting the focus from ethnic identity, obedience to the Mosaic Law, and Temple sacrifices to faith in Jesus Christ. This allows Gentiles to be included on equal footing with Jews, creating a new community centered on relationship with Jesus.

10. Acts 1:8 outlines the geographical expansion of the gospel message, from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria, and then to the ends of the earth, providing a framework for the narrative of Acts. This echoes the prophet Isaiah's program for the restoration of God's people, where the good news would spread from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

## Essay Questions

1. Compare and contrast the unique portrayals of Jesus in at least three of the four Gospels. What are the key themes and emphases of each Gospel, and how do they contribute to a fuller understanding of Christ?
2. Discuss the significance of Jesus' humanity as portrayed in the Gospels. Why is it important to avoid a docetic view of Jesus, and how does his humanity enable him to serve as our high priest?
3. Analyze Jesus' interactions with outcasts and marginalized individuals in the Gospels. What do these encounters reveal about his character and mission, and how do they challenge societal norms?
4. Examine Jesus' teachings on wealth and stewardship in the Gospels. What are the dangers of materialism, and what does it mean to have a proper attitude toward material possessions?
5. Explain how the book of Acts serves as a bridge between the Gospels and the Epistles in the New Testament. How does it demonstrate the continuation of Jesus' ministry through his followers, and how does it introduce key figures who wrote many of the New Testament letters?



## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Canon:** The authoritative collection of books recognized as divinely inspired and forming the sacred writings of Christianity.
- **Docetism:** An early Christian heresy that denied the full humanity of Jesus Christ, claiming he only *seemed* to be human.
- **Diatessaron:** A harmony of the four Gospels compiled by Tatian in the second century, attempting to create a single, unified account of Jesus' life.
- **Gentiles:** Non-Jewish people.
- **Logos (Word):** A Greek term used by John to describe Jesus as the divine Word of God, the ultimate revelation of God to humanity.
- **New Moses:** A portrayal of Jesus, particularly in Matthew's Gospel, as the one who fulfills the role of Moses in delivering God's people and providing authoritative teachings.
- **Passover Lamb:** A depiction of Jesus, especially in John's Gospel, as the sacrificial lamb whose death atones for the sins of humanity, fulfilling the Old Testament Passover tradition.
- **Synoptic Gospels:** The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which share similar content, structure, and perspective on the life of Jesus.
- **Suffering Servant:** A portrayal of Jesus, especially in Mark's Gospel, as the one who willingly suffers and dies for the sake of others, fulfilling Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah.
- **Stewardship:** The responsible management and use of resources, including wealth and possessions, in accordance with God's will.

## 5. FAQs on Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 12, Gospel Themes, Introduction to Acts, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### FAQ on Gospel Themes and Introduction to Acts

- **Why does the New Testament contain four separate Gospels instead of one combined account?**
- The Church chose to preserve four Gospels because each offers a unique perspective on Jesus Christ, emphasizing different aspects of his life, teachings, and identity. Combining them into a single narrative would risk blunting these individual voices and the distinct contributions each makes to our understanding of Jesus.
- **What are some of the distinct portrayals of Jesus in each of the four Gospels?**
- **Matthew:** Presents Jesus as the new Moses, a teacher, the Son of God, the descendant of David, and the fulfillment of the Old Testament, with a focus on including Gentiles.
- **Mark:** Balances Jesus' humanity and deity, portraying him as the suffering servant.
- **Luke:** Depicts Jesus as the Savior, the Son of David, and one with compassion for the outcasts of society.
- **John:** Highlights Jesus as the Passover Lamb, the Word (Logos), the Son of God, and as God himself.
- **Why is it important to emphasize Jesus' humanity as portrayed in the Gospels?**
- Emphasizing Jesus' humanity avoids a "docetic" view, which denies his full human nature. The Gospels reveal Jesus' growth in wisdom and stature (Luke), his experience of temptation (Hebrews), and his emotional responses to suffering and death (Luke in Gethsemane), all of which are essential to his role as our high priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses.

- **Beyond Jesus' deity, what are some other key themes that emerge from the Gospels collectively?**
- Besides Jesus' deity, the Gospels emphasize his humanity (avoiding a Docetic Jesus), his compassion for outcasts (avoiding a popular Jesus), his concern for stewardship (avoiding a wealthy Jesus), and his emphasis on community (avoiding an individualistic Jesus). A legalistic Jesus is avoided by portraying a concern for grace.
- **How does the book of Acts serve as a bridge between the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament?**
- Acts continues the story of what Jesus began to do in the Gospels, showing how his work is carried on through his followers after his ascension. It also introduces key figures, such as the Apostle Paul, who become authors of the epistles that make up a significant portion of the New Testament.
- **How does Acts 1:8 provide an outline for the book of Acts?**
- Acts 1:8 states, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." This verse outlines the geographical expansion of the gospel message, starting in Jerusalem and spreading outward, mirroring Isaiah's vision of restoration.
- **What is the significance of connecting the events in Acts to the prophecies in the book of Isaiah?**
- Connecting the events in Acts to Isaiah's prophecies demonstrates that the spread of the gospel through Jesus' followers is not just a missionary strategy, but the fulfillment of Old Testament promises of restoration and salvation. It signifies a new era where God's people are defined not by ethnicity or adherence to the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.
- **How did Jesus redefine the community of God's people?**
- Jesus redefined the community of God's people, traditionally marked by obedience to the Mosaic law, temple sacrifices, and Jewish ethnicity, to be centered on faith in him. This redefinition allowed Gentiles to be included in the community on the same basis as Jews, signifying a new era where response to Jesus Christ is the determining factor.