

## GOSPEL ORIGINS

Luke 1:1-4

### I. Intro

#### A. Welcome everyone!

1. Announcements
  - a) Church-Wide meeting next Sunday, 9/15 ,
  - b) Family Camp Oct. 11-13

#### B. Gospel of Matthew intro

##### 1. Why study a gospel?

- a) These are the only materials we have to accurately know who Jesus is, what He came to do, what He taught, and what the nature and purpose of the Church is. All the other NT documents are based on the four gospels.

##### 2. Why begin with a study of the origins of the gospels?

- a) Current culture casts massive doubt on the reliability, historicity, and authority of the gospels. If one can show or prove that the gospels cannot or should not be trusted, or if they can show that they simply need to be reinterpreted in every generation, then there is great damage which can be, and has been, done to the Church and her witness. Much of progressive and liberal Christianity today is a result of the damage done by liberal skepticism and scholarship which seeks to cast major doubt on the gospels.
  - b) Not a bad thing to ask “how” God gave us His books, which was through normal historical channels. The gospel authors had sources, including themselves as witnesses.
3. “Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.”—Luke 1:1-4
- a) Read, declare, thank

### II. Origins

#### A. What is a Gospel?

1. Definition and Usage of “Gospel”
  - a) Greco-Roman usage
  - b) Christian usage
    - (1) “Gospel” was first used not for a book but to refer to the announcement of good news of Jesus.
      - (a) “On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised” — Galatians 2:7
      - (b) “but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.” — 1 Thessalonians 2:4
    - (2) Primarily dependent on OT, not Greco-Roman usage: See Isaiah’s usage in chapters 40-66. God promise that he will deliver Israel through a “New Exodus” in the desert and restore their blessing and bring them redemption.
      - (a) “Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, “Behold your God!” Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.” — Isaiah 40:9-11
      - (b) “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty

to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor" — Isaiah 61:1-2

(3) Transition from oral proclamation to a written text. The word "Gospel" is used for written texts by the early second century.

c) How did the transition happen? It may be due to the Gospel of Mark. Mark 1:1 – "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ"

## 2. What kind of literary genre is a "Gospel"

a) Is it a collection of Oral Jesus Stories (or Sermons)?

(1) In this view the gospels are simply collections of early oral material combined together in a written document.

(a) Features

(b) Problems

### b) Greco-Roman Biography (Bios)

(1) Literature seeking to immortalize and eulogize a hero, whether it be a philosopher, general, or king

(a) **Examples:** Philo's Moses, Xenophon's Agesilaus or Memoirs of Socrates

(b) Justin Martyr refers to the Gospels in similar language used within that of Xenophon's Memoirs of Socrates.

(c) **Features:** Focus on a real historical person. General chronological outline, but main character can also be analyzed thematically. Can be lopsided: tends to focus on birth and public life and not as much childhood. Average length is 10k-20k words (Gospels of Matt and Luke are approx. 20k). Written by a singular author, not a generic "community" as Bultmann and the form critics allege (they suggest the authors are merely collectors of community material).

(d) **Implications-** Gospels are not just recording theology (as Form critics maintained) but also recording history, but this history is not "pure" but always limited due to the written medium.

(e) Gospels cannot be viewed liked "video tapes" of the past but are more like paintings (which can be abstract and different than a photograph).

i) "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." — John 20:30-31

### c) Covenant Document

(1) Meredith Kline: Parallel between the Gospels and Exodus

(2) Similarities include: Combination of narrative and teaching material.

(3) Structure: Life of covenant mediator. Redemption of God's people by covenant mediator. Moses/Exodus Typology in the Gospels.

(4) Luke 9:31 – Exodus

(5) Matt 2:15- Out of Egypt I called my son, Association of Jesus with the Passover meal, Jesus in the wilderness as the Israelites were

(6) Matt 5: Jesus the new lawgiver in the place of Moses

(7) John 6: Jesus feeds people with bread from heaven like Moses did

## III. Critiques

### A. The Question of Origins

1. Luke's Prologue (Luke 1:1-4) **Oral stage**

a) Stage 1: Eyewitnesses "handed down" the message. **Written stage**

b) Stage 2: Many already "drew up" accounts. **Redaction stage**

c) Stage 3: Luke himself investigated and wrote his own account.

### B. Oral Stage

1. Elements of Form Criticism

- a) Gospels material originally circulated in individual oral units before being fixed in written form, gospel writers were “collectors” rather than authors.
- b) The claim is that the gospel authors did not simply sit down and write their story, but rather collected a bunch of smaller stories. Thus, by identifying these smaller stories, form critics argue we can get back to the oral tradition before the gospels were written
- c) Each of these discrete pericopes can be placed into different categories of “forms”
- d) Each type of form is assigned a Sitz im Leben (“situated in life”)
- e) The pericopes developed and changed as they were passed down through the early church

## 2. Evaluation

- a) **Positive:** not a bad thing to think about what or why the stories that were preserved and passed down were the ones given. Not a bad thing to seek to discover the larger purpose for each gospel author, for they all do have a purpose in writing what they wrote, and in using the various OT scriptures that they use
- b) **Negative**
  - (1) Form criticism mistakenly assumes that the early church would have either created or substantially changed the tradition along the way
  - (2) Memorization
    - (a) Birger Gerhardsson (Scandinavian School): “A good Jewish disciple is like a well-constructed cistern and does not lose a drop”
  - (3) Eyewitnesses to “Control” the Tradition.
    - (a) Jesus tradition was in the hands of key individuals
    - (b) “if the form critics are right, the disciples must have been translated to heaven immediately after the Resurrection.”- Vincent Taylor, Formation of the Gospel Tradition.
    - (c) NT evidence that the Tradition was being carefully passed down
    - (d) 1 Corinthians 15:3- “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.”

## C. Written Stage

- 1. The Synoptic Problem
  - a) Explanation of the “problem”
    - (1) Not a problem, but certainly a curiosity. Question is how did they know each other? Not a problem about reliability, but about relationship. There is no clear and direct answer to it, but it certainly shows how these written material were used by one another and shared, compared, and adding individual things.
  - b) Basic Data
    - (1) Of the 661 verses in Mark
    - (2) Approx. 500 occur in Matthew in some form
    - (3) Approx. 350 occur in Luke in some form
    - (4) Only 31 verses are unique to Mark (meaning they have parallels in Matthew or Luke)
    - (5) Of the 1068 verses in Matthew approx. 300 have no parallel
    - (6) Of the 1149 verses in Luke, approx. 520 have no parallel
    - (7) There are about 235 verses shared by both Matt and Luke but are not in Mark

## D. Redaction Stage

### 1. Main Elements

- a) Distinction between Tradition and Redaction
  - (1) Patterns of Changes/Redaction can reveal theological concerns of the author
  - (2) Criteria for how to spot redactional activity:
    - (a) Order of the material- Ex. Order of temptations in Matt and Luke. Matt ends with Jesus on the mountain, Luke ends with Jesus above the temple. Matt is seen as original. Luke is thought to change to emphasize his focus on the temple.
    - (b) Omission of material- Ex. Luke 9:27 leaves out the “in power” of Mark 9:1
    - (c) Addition/Change of material- Ex. In Mark 14:62, Jesus says the high priest will see him at the right hand of God; in Luke 22:69, he says he will simply be at the right hand of God

- (d) Historical Context or Seams- Ex. Parable of the Lost Sheep is told to disciples in Matt; in Luke, Jesus gives the parable to the Pharisees
- (e) The theological concern of the evangelist is given its own Sitz Im Leben.
- (f) Positives
- (g) Criticisms
  - i) Cannot always distinguish between tradition and redaction
  - ii) Not all changes are theological
  - iii) Can't determine an author's theology just by what they changed
  - iv) Sometimes used to show the gospels are not historical

## E. Canonical Stage

### 1. Gospels in the Early Church- 4 Established Gospels

- a) Irenaeus: "It is not possible that the Gospels can be either more or fewer in number than they are, since there are four directions in the world in which we are, and four principles winds. The four living creatures symbolize the four gospels and there were four principle covenants made with humanity, through Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Christ." (Haer. 3.11.8)
- b) Muratorian Fragment (c. 180)
- c) Early Gospel Codices (parchments which contain multiple gospels in a single unit)
  - (1) P4-P64-P67, P75, P45
- d) Indications of a Fourfold Gospel in Middle to Early Second Century
  - (1) Tatian - Diatessaron (harmony of the four gospels, c. 160)
  - (2) Justin Martyr (100-165) c. 150
  - (3) Papias (70-140) c. 125

### 2. Gospel Titles

- a) Form of the titles: "Gospel According to" unique way of titling a book in the first century. Would have been "book of", but instead the gospel authors are uniformly using a different title

### 3. What about Apocryphal Gospels?

- a) Problem
- b) **Faulty response:** All Jesus material outside the canonical gospels is completely untrustworthy and fabricated
  - (1) The canonical gospels are not the first written sources
  - (2) The canonical gospels likely depended on earlier written sources
  - (3) If all other gospel traditions outside the canonical gospels are unreliable then we have difficulty explain how these four are such remarkable exceptions
  - (4) Correct Response: The apocryphal traditions that have the most historical credibility tend to look a lot like the material in the canonical Gospels.
  - (5) "All inspired things are true, but not all true things are inspired" —Dr. Michael Kruger

## IV. Confidence

### A. Why spend time on this foundation?

- 1. That we might have great confidence in the Scriptures, that they are in fact reliable, accurate, and authoritative. To equip us saints to give a defense for those who seek to cast doubt on the Scriptural tradition. And for us to truly prize God's Word in our lives, that it is the primary source of truth about God and all things, and that it is the primary way by which we can relate with our Lord Jesus Christ.
  - a) "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." —John 20:30-31
  - b) "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." —2 Timothy 3:16-17
- 2. Let's pray
  - a) "Most High God, creator of the ends of the earth, governor of the universe, judge of all men, head of the church, savior of sinners; Your greatness is unsearchable, Your goodness infinite,

*Your compassions unfailing, Your providence boundless, and Your mercies ever new! We bless You for the words of salvation: We are lost, but in it You have presented to us a full, free, and eternal salvation; weak: but here we learn that help is found in the One who is mighty; poor: but in Him we discover unsearchable riches; blind: but we find He has treasures of wisdom and knowledge. We Thank You for you unspeakable gift. Your Son is our only refuge, foundation, hope, and confidence; we depend upon His death, rest in His righteousness and desire to bear His image. May His glory fill our minds, His love rule our affections, and His cross enflame our zeal. We pray this in Jesus name, Amen."*