

# **MINEOLA BIBLE INSTITUTE AND SEMINARY**

## **The Gospels**

**Radical, Biblical, Apostolic, Christianity**



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## THE GOSPELS

Christianity, as a movement, owes its beginning to the person and work of Jesus Christ, who is Founder and Head. Except for a few fragmentary statements, the authentic records of His life are contained in the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

The approach to the Gospels deals with them as four separate works, written at different times and in different places. Obviously, they were read separately when first published rather than studied in parts, of a harmonistic ensemble, and each was regarded by its writer and by its audience as containing a narrative, complete for its purpose.

From the beginning of the Church at Pentecost until the middle of the second century, no published harmony of the life of Christ existed, and the Gospels seemed to have been circulated independently in different sections of the Roman Empire.

The Gospels themselves, do not claim to be exhaustive accounts of all that Jesus said or did. On the contrary, at least two of them deny any such possibility, and the other two, negate it, by implication. John states that “many other signs, therefore, did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this Book” (John 20:30), and Luke acknowledges that “many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us” (Luke

1:1). Matthew announced that he was writing “the book of the generation of Jesus Christ”

(Matthew 1:1), and Mark entitled his work as “the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1). Each Gospel was selective according to the purpose of the author, and is complete in the sense, that it carries out this intent.

The individual differences of the four Gospels are counterbalanced by strong resemblances of order, content, and phraseology. Many events in the life of Christ are narrated in all four. Since they are dealing with the same person, it is only natural that there should be substantial agreement on the selection and description of the main

features of Jesus' career.

## The Synoptic Problem

Between the first three Gospels, however, there is a closer interrelation in content and in manner of expression. They have consequently been called the Synoptic Gospels, from the Greek *syn*, together, and *optanomai*, to see, since they take a common view of the life of Christ. This interrelation has given rise to the Synoptic problem, so called, which is briefly this: If the three Synoptic Gospels are totally independent of each other in origin and development, why do they resemble each other so closely, even to exact verbal agreement in many places? If, on the other hand, they have a literary relationship to each other, how can they be three independent witnesses to the deeds and teachings of Jesus Christ?

Neither part of this dilemma can rightly be suppressed or neglected. Facts must be explained by the best and most reasonable hypotheses available. Nevertheless, one should not assume that he has a final answer to the question when much evidence is still lacking, nor should he be satisfied with a purely naturalistic answer that will not do justice to the origin of the Gospels or to any other part of Scripture.

As a concrete example of the kind of passage that creates this problem, one might take the healing of the leper, described in Matthew 8:1-4, Mark 1:40-45, and Luke 5:12-16. All of them are narrating the same event, for the action is alike in all three, and the conversation is almost identical, verbally. Each is introduced by a different sentence to fit the general context of the narrative, but the words of Jesus are nearly the same.

How shall the verbal agreement be explained? Why should three men, writing independently, show such exact accord in their language? Did the writers of the Gospels copy each others works, or did they use a common source, or did they collaborate together?

## The Proposed Solution

Many theories have been presented to account for these phenomena. In general, they may be classified in three ways:

1. The theory of oral tradition.
2. The theory of reciprocal borrowing.
3. The theory of documentary sources.

The oral tradition theory is the oldest of the three, since it seems to have been the underlying assumption of the Church fathers. Papias asserts that, Matthew recorded the sayings of Jesus in Aramaic notes, and that every man interpreted them as he was able. Mark, he said, was Peter's scribe and interpreter, who wrote accurately all that he remembered, but did not necessarily, put it in original order of speaking or action. Irenaeus followed the same line of thought, calling Luke's writings, a reproduction of Pauline preaching, and by attributing the Fourth Gospel to the disciple of Jesus, who leaned on His breast at the Last Supper.

It is possible that the fathers could be mistaken in this regard. In the century between the fall of Jerusalem and the height of Irenaeus's career, the Church was too busy engaged in preaching and in defending itself to pay much attention to the technicalities of authorship. On the other hand, Papias and Irenaeus, are the earliest direct witnesses to the authorship of the Gospels, and their testimony should not be rejected without a fair attempt to interpret it.

In each instance that they mention, they assume that the Gospel writer, either possessed personal knowledge of Jesus' works and teachings, or else, that he was reproducing the content of preaching, which he had heard repeatedly from some Apostolic authority. The theory assumes, that the facts concerning Jesus, had been collected and organized, then memorized, and finally delivered orally, in a fairly fixed form.

Several factors lend itself to this view. First, is the certainty that the message of the Gospels was preached before it was written. If Jesus were to be presented to the masses by His followers, they must tell a consistent story, containing the significant elements of His career, and they must repeat these as they encountered new audiences, or as they instructed the believers by repetition. Constant reiteration tends to crystallization of form; a repeated story will become stereotyped. Paul mentions the message which he “received” (I Corinthians 15:3) and “preached” (Galatians 1:11), in terms which imply that there was an underlying core of fact which he could not alter. He does not speak of using any written documents. Such documents may or may not have been known during his preaching career, although in II Timothy 4:13, he spoke of “books” and “parchments” which probably included some Scriptures. It is quite likely that written accounts of Jesus’ life were circulated prior to the Neronian persecution of 64 A.D.

The second theory, is mutual interdependence, namely, that two of the Gospels, borrowed from the other for material. It would be profitless, in this brief account, to review every possible order that has been suggested. Such a theory, if accepted, would destroy the originality of the two Gospels that copied from the third. While it is true that the ancients were not bound by copyright laws, and that they regarded any written document as freely available for use as they pleased, it seems hardly credible that they would have copied each other indiscriminately.

Furthermore, if, for instance, Matthew copied from Luke, why should he have created so different an order of events or have omitted so much material that the latter contains? No two scholars could agree on the same sequence of writing or on the same explanation of the phenomena. The conflicting theories are good evidence of the insecurity of the hypothesis.

The most popular theory to date, is the documentary hypothesis, which assumes that Matthew and Luke made their Gospels on the basis of Mark, plus a collection of the sayings of Jesus, called “Q,” for the German Quelle, meaning “source.” Students of the Gospels have noticed that

while Matthew and Luke diverge greatly from each other in content and order, the content of Mark is reproduced, almost wholly, in the other two. Although Matthew and Mark may occasionally agree against Luke, or while Luke and Mark may agree against Matthew, Matthew and Luke do not agree against Mark. The phenomena are what one might expect if they had used Mark independently.

Some discourse material, like the Sermon on the Mount, common to Matthew and Luke, does not appear in Mark. On the ground that collections of the sayings of Jesus are found in the Papyri from an early date, and that the use of such a source would parallel the supposed use of Mark, the second source, "Q," has been reconstructed.

A further development of this view was proposed by Burnett Streeter. He has suggested that the sources were four, and included an "M" document embodying the peculiar narrative material of Matthew, and an "L" document or proto-Luke, containing the results of Luke's private research. From these four ancestors, the first and third Gospels were descended, while Mark, one of the sources, survived independently.

The documentary theory, while plausible, has one or two weaknesses. The first is that it overlooks the possibility of living contact between the authors during the period of the actual writing of the Gospels. John Mark was an inhabitant of Jerusalem during the lifetime of Jesus, and during the early years of the Church, up to the time of Herod Agrippa I, in 44 A.D. (Acts 12:12). He subsequently visited the Gentile Church in Syrian Antioch and participated in Gentile evangelism with Paul and Barnabas (13:4-5). He was constantly associated with the preachers of the Church to the end of his life.

No certain factors are known about the career of Matthew. He most likely lived in Jerusalem for a part of the time that Mark was there, since the apostles did not leave Jerusalem until after the death of Stephen and the persecution following it (8:1).

It is noteworthy, however, that the allusions to the Gospel writings in the earliest of the Fathers, seemed to accord best with the Gospel of Matthew, and to indicate that it was well known in

Antioch at an early date.

Luke was acquainted with John Mark at a later time, for their names are mentioned together in Colossians 4:10, 14, and in II Timothy 4:11. Both were closely associated with Paul about the time of his imprisonment in Rome (c. A.D. 60-67). Luke may have lived at Antioch himself, for he shows considerable interest in the city, and one manuscript uses the first personal pronoun plural in Acts 11:28, making the author a participant in the action.

While the foregoing facts do not prove conclusively that the writers of the Synoptics conferred with each other over the events which they recorded, they do make plausible the possibility of a common tradition known to these men by personal contact and propagated as the general message of the Church. The interchange and repetition of the narrative preaching about Jesus would explain much of the material common to the Synoptics, while the personal research and interests of the authors would explain the materials peculiar to each. The existence of such a core is corroborated by occasional references in the New Testament to preaching about Christ (I Corinthians 15:1-11, Galatians 2:2, 7).

One may say, with regard to "Q," that no trace of this hypothetical document has ever been recovered. Even those who advocate the documentary hypothesis admit that it was not a Gospel. Undeniably, collections of Jesus' sayings existed at an early date, for some of these sayings of Jesus have been recovered from the Papyri, but there is no real convincing proof of the independent existence of this shadowy scroll.

There has been an attempt in recent years to penetrate behind these documentary sources to the origin of the material from which they were constructed. The Formgeschichte school has contended that the sources were compiled from anecdotes about Jesus and from fragments of His teaching that were circulated independently by His followers. These stories have been classified in various categories, such as miracles, epigrams, edifying tales of good deeds, and historical recitals, like the Passion narrative of Jesus' last days. According to this theory, these biographical items were collected, put in a

framework constructed by the author, and woven into a narrative, which became either a Gospel source or a Gospel.

The Formgeschichte theory takes one back to oral tradition, but deals with it as an incoherent mass of fragments rather than as an organized presentation of the life of Jesus. Undoubtedly, many episodes of Jesus' life and bits of His teachings were used as illustrations or texts, and would become known to the public apart from any context. It is quite as possible, however, that they may have been detached from an existing body of history, as that they were simply odd recollections, assembled by accident. From the very first day of Christian preaching, there must have been some logical sequence of narrative that was used to present the person and career of Jesus to men.

Not one of these theories, briefly presented here, has proved sufficient, to account for the origin of the Gospels. Much more evidence is needed before a complete answer can be given to all of the questions involved. A few facts, however, seem certain.

1. The Gospel of Matthew represents the notes that He took on Jesus' teaching, with a framework of narrative that closely resembles Mark. This resemblance could be explained on the basis of common tradition and of living contact quite as well as by appropriation of written work.

2. The Gospel of Mark represents the main line of narrative preaching about Jesus. It was produced by a man who had contact with the apostles from the very inception of the Church, and it was written while some of them were still alive. Its content was known at a very early date, whether the actual document had been published then or not.

3. The Gospel of Luke represents the independent account of Paul's traveling companion, who wrote in the seventh decade of the first century, and who included both the narrative framework of Apostolic preaching and the results of his own research. Many of the parables and miracles presented in Luke, are not identical with those of Matthew, and even the teachings of Jesus are organized differently. If, Luke and Matthew, both used a "Q," one of them certainly took liberties with it. Either, Matthew arranged the bulk

of its teachings, topically, as in the Sermon on the Mount, or else, Luke scattered its teachings through the Gospel, at will. It is more reasonable to assume that Luke may have met Matthew personally, or that his reproduction of the sayings of Jesus had its source in direct contact with the people who had first heard them, and with the apostles who preached them.

Some other aspects of this question deserve some consideration. One, is that the dates of composition and publication may be widely separated. Matthew, for instance, could have collected his notes during Jesus' lifetime, but they may not have reached the public in organized form until a long time afterward. If so, they could have been identical with the former collection.

The final form in which these individual notes were written would be influenced by the predominant tradition and by the application of it to the individual need. Differences would arise from the varying application of Jesus' teachings to local needs and by adaptation for individual purposes. The same episodes can be used in different frameworks and can rightly be applied to very different circumstances. The disagreements in the accounts, thus, become negligible, since they do not predicate any deep inconsistency with the documents themselves.

The Gospels should be treated as honest efforts to arrange the life of Jesus for didactic purposes. Unquestionably, it was the core of Apostolic preaching, for it appears in Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost, in his sermon in the house of Cornelius, and in Paul's address in Antioch of Pisidia. The Synoptists could not have been ignorant of this "oral tradition," as it is called; in fact, Luke's preface implies that the writer knew what had been handed down "by Ministers of the Word" (Luke 1:2). While the theory of oral tradition may not explain all of the Synoptic problem, it is worth more attention than has been given to it in recent years.

The purposes of the Evangelists should be taken into account. Granting that they possessed much material in common, they put it to different uses, and organized it into different frameworks, under the direction of the Holy Ghost. The very differences between

the writers, speak of the independence, the similarities reflect a common background of information, a common subject of writing, and the common inspiration of God.

## **THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW**

The first Gospel is traditionally ascribed to Matthew Levi, a tax collector or publican, whom Jesus called to be one of His twelve disciples (Matthew 9:9-13). Almost nothing is known of him except, his name and occupation. After the listing of the apostles in the book of Acts (Acts 1:13),

he disappeared from the history of the Church, except for allusions that are probably legendary.

Eusebius (325 A.D.), quotes Papias (100 A.D.), as saying, that Matthew had composed, in Aramaic, the oracles of the Lord, which were translated into Greek by each man as he was able. Irenaeus, about a century and a half earlier than Eusebius, stated that, "Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome and laying the foundations of the Church.

Several inferences may be drawn from these early statements concerning the origin of the first Gospel. First, the Matthaean authorship was undisputed. Since Matthew was a comparatively obscure member of the Apostolic band, there seems to be no good reason for making him the author of a spurious work. Any forger, who sought fame for his production, would have chosen to publish it under the name of a more renowned apostle. Second, the general agreement of early writers accords with the known character of Matthew. As a publican, Matthew must have been literate and used to taking notes as a part of his business activity. Third, the tradition that this Gospel was originally written in Aramaic, does not preclude the possibility that the author may have published later, a Greek edition, which quickly superseded the older writing.

## ***DATE AND PLACE***

Just when the Gospel of Matthew was written, is unknown. It can hardly have been written before the dispersion of the Jerusalem Christians (Acts 8:4), for the local Church in Jerusalem, would not have needed a written Gospel, since the apostles were physically present to answer all questions and to impart authoritative teaching. It seems doubtful, whether it was written subsequent to 70 A.D., because in the prophecy dealing with the overthrow of Jerusalem, there is no allusion to the city's actually having fallen (Matthew 24:1-28). The testimony of Irenaeus, would have placed its writing in the time of Nero, "while Peter and Paul were in Rome." If this tradition is correct, it may have been composed by Matthew, originally, for non-Palestinian Aramaic-speaking converts, who did not have access to the apostles and who were consequently, dependent for their knowledge of Jesus upon a written text.

The testimony of Papias has been frequently rejected since no trace of an Aramaic original has survived and since the language of the Gospel bears no marks of being a Greek translation. Promiscuous translations, such as Papias mentions, would hardly yield the good Greek of the existing Gospel. On the other hand, it is possible that seeing the demand for written information about the life of Jesus, the author made a Greek edition for the Gentile Churches, perhaps for Antioch, in particular. Since the Greek Churches quickly outstripped the Aramaic Churches in numbers and in influence, the Aramaic original might have perished at an early date. Contradictory opinions have been expressed concerning the original language of the Gospel of Matthew. In any case, the existing Greek text is early and should be regarded as an edition, rather than as a translation from Aramaic.

Matthew's Gospel is suited to a Church which was still closely related to Judaism, though becoming increasingly independent of it. It breathes the atmosphere of Messianism, yet, it has a message for all the world. It preserves the essence of the Abrahamic Covenant, which stressed God's benefits to Abraham and to his seed as a

separate people, and yet added: “In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:3).

The place of writing could be Antioch. The quotations of the Gospels in the early patristic writings, like those of Papias and of Ignatius, agree most closely with the text of Matthew and show that this first Gospel was most likely the favorite of the Syro-Jewish Church. Furthermore, the Church at Antioch was the first to have a markedly Gentile membership which spoke, both Aramaic and Greek. While absolute proof that the Gospel originated in Antioch is lacking, there is no other place more suitable for it. It may, therefore, have been composed sometime between 50 and 70 A.D., and have been circulated by those who worked in and from the Church of Antioch.

## ***CONTENT***

The theme of the Gospel of Matthew is announced by its opening words: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matthew 1:1). The phraseology reminds one of the book of Genesis, which is divided into sections by the use of the same phrase, “the book of the generations of....” or “the generations of....” (Genesis 2:4, 5:1). Each occurrence of this phrase, marked a stage in the development of the Messianic promise. The links in the history of God’s people are carried forward through Genesis, and one appears in Ruth 4:18, where the Messianic line ends with David. Matthew picks up the genealogy, at this point, and illustrates its fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ.

The structure of the book of Matthew is built around a double outline which can be traced by recurring phrases in the book. The first is biographical and is quite similar to the framework of the biography of Jesus as given in Mark and in Luke. There are two points of division: the first in Matthew 4:17, “From that time, began Jesus to preach, and to say, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” and the second in Matthew 16:21, “From that time, began Jesus to show unto His disciples, that He must go unto Jerusalem and

suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up.” The former of these two passages, indicates the rise of Jesus’ preaching career, which brought Him into public prominence. The latter passage, marked the beginning of the decline of His popularity and pointed toward the culmination of His career at the cross. The fact that these two focuses of His life are so clearly marked in the Gospel, indicates the avowed purpose of the author to present two aspects of Jesus’ biography and shows that he had a unitary concept of that life as a whole. The Gospel is no mere aggregation of fragmentary sayings and random stories, but it is definitely organized to show how the Messiah discharged the calling for which He came into the world.

The other structure of Matthew is peculiar to this Gospel. Whereas, the previously mentioned outline is a biographical interpretation of the life of Jesus, this other outline is topical. The material is divided into five blocks of text, each of which is grouped around one dominant theme, and each of which ends with the phrase, “When Jesus had finished....” With the introductory narrative and the concluding story of the Passion, there are seven divisions in all, which are summarized in an epilogue that confronts the reader with the consequences of Jesus’ Messianic claims. The sharp contrast of the action of the priests on the report of the guard at the tomb and the action of the disciples upon the revelation of the risen Lord, compel the reader to choose for himself which attitude he will take. Either he must align himself with the Jewish leaders, who repudiated Jesus and would not acknowledge His claims under any circumstances, or else, he must himself, become a disciple.

## ***OUTLINE***

### **Matthew: The Gospel of the Messiah**

#### I. The Prophecies of the Messiah Realized

The Advent

1:1; 4:11

#### II. The Principles of the Messiah Announced

The Inaugural Address	4:12; 7:29
Challenge to Enter	(7:13-14)
III. The Power of the Messiah Revealed	
The Miracles	8:1; 11:1
Challenge to Follow	(10:34-39)
IV. The Program of the Messiah Explained	
The Parables	11:2; 13:53
Challenge to Acceptance	(11:28)
Challenge to Understanding	(13:51)
V. The Purpose of the Messiah Declared	
The Crisis of the Cross	13:54; 19:2
Challenge to Testify	(16:13-15)
VI. The Problems of the Messiah Presented	
The Conflicts with Opponents	19:3; 26:2
Challenge to Repentance	(23:37-39)
VII. The Passion of the Messiah Accomplished	
The Death and Resurrection	26:3; 28:10
VIII. Epilogue	
Rumor and Reality	28:11-20
Challenge to Action	(28:16-20)

The first of these sections acquaints the student with the background of the Messiah. His genealogy, stemming from Abraham, the initial recipient of God's promises, and from David, divinely chosen founder of Judah's royal house, is first stated in the opening verse and then demonstrated. The account of the virgin birth follows, together with the baptism, and the temptation that prepared Christ for His public labors. In this section of three and one-half chapters, the phrase, "that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet," or some similar expression, occurs no less than five times. The advent of Jesus, is thus, depicted as the completion of the divine purpose which was revealed in the Old Testament and which was partially worked out in the historical process which preceded His coming.

The second section opens with the appearance of Jesus in Galilee after the imprisonment of John the Baptist. It is devoted mainly to the declaration of the spiritual and ethical principles of the Messianic kingdom. Jesus summoned men to repentance and to faith in Him, and as He declared to them the realm in which He was Lord, He sought to point out what the nature of that realm would be and how it could be entered.

Matthew alone, uses the phrase, "the kingdom of heaven," thirty-three times. Five times, he speaks of "the kingdom of God" (6:33; 12:28; 19:24; 21:31; 21:43). The other Synoptics use the latter term in many passages where Matthew employs "kingdom of heaven." While Jesus asserted unmistakably, that His kingdom would have an ultimate material manifestation (8:11; 13:40-43), He also made plain, that it has a present spiritual existence (4:17; 12:28).

The spiritual principles of the kingdom were embodied in the Sermon on the Mount, of which, Matthew gives the fullest record. It defined Jesus' position, with regard to the Law, for He said, that He "came not to destroy, but to fulfill" (5:17). Jesus demanded a righteousness that exceeded the standard of Jewish legalism, for it was inward, not outward; spontaneous, not legalistic; gauged by a person, and not by a code. Its highest standard was God Himself: "Ye, therefore, shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (5:28). In this respect, Jesus went beyond the Law when He said: "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time....but I say unto you" (5:21-22). The Sermon on the Mount is a direct assertion of His right to transcend the Law. Jesus did not revoke the Law, but He went beyond it by the sheer holiness of His person.

The criterion of righteousness in the Sermon on the Mount is not conformity with human ideals, but consists in knowledge of Christ, in hearing His sayings, and in doing them (7:23-24). The full import of Christ's person and work, was yet, to be realized, but the necessity of making Him central to all of His teaching and to all of faith, is stated here, unmistakably.

In order that these principles might be validated in the thinking of potential believers, some proofs of Jesus' power were necessary. The third section of Matthew (8:1; 11:1), is

occupied first, with a recital of miracles of various types which showed Jesus' power over diseases. The commission to the twelve disciples, which is described in Matthew 10, may be regarded as Jesus' delegation of power to these men and as His reassurance to them as they set out to exercise it. The preaching of the Messiah was not just the proclamation of a new ideal, but was to be the demonstration of a new power, a concept, which the book of Acts states, became a reality in the later life of the Church: "And with great power, gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them" (Acts 4:33).

Such miraculous acts, whether of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself or of His disciples, were not a sporadic and aimless show of power. Jesus was seeking to teach the multitude and to inaugurate a program for His kingdom, rather than to bewilder or to amaze the crowds.

Beginning with the fourth section of Matthew (11:2; 13:53), the parables are featured strongly. Not all of them belong to this part of the Gospel, but the greatest single aggregation of them is here in the thirteenth chapter. In figures taken from everyday life, they portray the nature and program of the kingdom of heaven, particularly with reference to the future.

Jesus declared that the parables were intended, both to reveal and to conceal truth, for when the disciples asked Him, why He used parables in speaking to the crowds, Jesus said:

*Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. (Matthew 13:11)*

Jesus intended that His instructions should be plain to those who were ready for it and obscure to those who were rebellious.

- |                            |                 |
|----------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. The Soils               | 13:1-23         |
| 2. The Wheat and the Tares | 13:24-30, 36-43 |

- |                     |          |
|---------------------|----------|
| 3. The Mustard Seed | 13:31-32 |
| 4. The Leaven       | 13:33    |
| 5. The Treasure     | 13:44    |
| 6. The Pearl        | 13:45-46 |
| 7. The Net          | 13:47    |
| 8. The Householder  | 13:51-52 |

The list is divided at verse 36, where it is said, that Jesus withdrew from the multitudes and went indoors, so that four parables were designed for the multitude, and four for His disciples.

The first four, then, present the kingdom of heaven to the crowd. Its inception, by sowing the Word of God, its reception by various types of hearers, the contrast of real and spurious response in the wheat and the tares, the amazing growth of the kingdom from a tiny beginning to a large tree, the dynamic forces of the kingdom, as compared to leaven - all these were factors which Jesus wanted the people to know.

The last four parables deal with inner aspects of the kingdom: the cost of building it, the double destiny of those affected by it, and the intermingling of new and old elements in its teaching.

All of the parables indicate that Jesus was not thinking of Himself simply as a Jewish reformer, but as the Sovereign of the earth and as a figure of world importance.

The eleventh and twelfth chapters, preceding the parables, contain additional discourses which bear on the nature and importance of His mission. The challenge of John the Baptist (11:2-19), Jesus' rejection by the Galilean cities (11:20-24), His authority over the Sabbath (12:1-14), and His authority over the demons (12:22-37) - all contribute to the understanding of His work as a super-natural Person, who had come to earth on an unusual errand.

The crisis of this mission is anticipated in the next section of Matthew (13:54; 19:2).

The rejection of Jesus by His fellow citizens (13:54-58), the threat of Herod in the death of John the Baptist (14:1-12), the obtuseness of the disciples (15:1-16, 16:5-12), indicated tensions that brought from Jesus, a declaration of the imminence of the cross and also the revelation of Himself in the transfiguration (16:21; 17:8). From this point on, in the narrative, the cross loomed increasingly before Jesus, and became the immediate objective of His earthly career.

The declaration of the Messianic purpose led to conflict. In chapters 19:3 to 26:2, the problems of the Messiah are described and His conflicts with His opponents, appear in definite events, such as, the debates with the Herodians, the Sadducees, and the Pharisees (25:15-40). The denunciations of chapter 23 and the prediction of the desolation of Jerusalem in chapters 24 and 25, grew out of this conflict.

Conflict must come to a crisis, and in the life of the Messiah, that crisis was the cross. Matthew 26:3, through 28:10, describes Christ's Passion, His death, and His resurrection. Matthew stressed the Messianic character of His death, by emphasizing its relation to prophecy. Four times, Jesus alluded to the Old Testament, as applying to the events of His Passion (26:31, 54-56; 27:9 ), and in replying to Caiaphas' questioning, He used of Himself, the title, Son of man (26:64), which in Daniel 7:13,14, was applied to a heavenly being.

The epilogue is a summary of the whole Gospel, clinching its teaching by illustrating the two attitudes toward Jesus: rejection in unbelief, or worship because of acceptance.

Each of the sections contains a challenge to the disciples, spoken by Jesus, which is obviously intended by the author, to be a challenge to his reader also. At the close of the didactic section containing the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus called upon the disciples to take the first step of entering the way, which leads to life (Matthew 7:13-14). As soon as Jesus had proved His power to them, He commissioned them as witnesses and challenged them to take up the cross and follow Him (10:34-41). In the section dealing with the explanation of His program, there is a double challenge: one to the multitude to come to Him for rest (11:28), and one to the disciples, asking if they had understood His

Words (13:51). Jesus wanted to make sure that His claims brought, both volitional and intellectual, response. The prediction of the cross at the great turning-point in His life, evoked a call for committal: "Who say ye that I am?" (16:15). Jesus' rejection by Jerusalem constrained Him to summon the rebellious city to repentance (23:37-39). With the denouement of the story, the Great Commission says, "Go ye therefore....," the final appeal of the Gospel as a whole. Each section, is thus, applied practically to the action of the reader as he makes his way progressively through the book.

### ***EMPHASIS***

The Gospel of Matthew was written to show how Jesus enlarged and explained the revelation which had been begun in the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. Although it is strongly Jewish in its character, it was written also for the benefit of Gentiles, since the final commission enjoined the Twelve to make disciples "of all the nations" (28:19). If it were originally composed for the benefit of the Church at Antioch, where Gentile converts first came together in large numbers, the reason for its character would be plain. Matthew was seeking to show to these converts the meaning of Jesus' ministry in terms of the Old Testament which their Jewish colleagues believed, and from which they themselves had been taught.

Certain events are peculiar to Matthew. The vision of Joseph (1:20-24), the visit of the Magi (2:1-12), the flight into Egypt (2:13-15), the massacre of the infants (2:16), the dream of Pilate's wife (27:19), the death of Judas (27:3-10), the bribery of the guard (28:12-15), and the baptismal commission (28:19-20), appear nowhere else in the Gospels. Among the parables, the tares (13:24-30), the hidden treasure (13:44), the pearl (13:45-46), the dragnet (13:47), the unmerciful servant (18:23-35), the laborers in the vineyard (20:1-16), the two sons (21:28-32), the marriage of the king's son (22:1-13), the ten virgins (25:1-13), and the talents (25:14-30), are exclusively Matthaean.

Only three miracles are peculiar to Matthew: the two blind men (9:27-31), the dumb demonic (9:32-33), and the coin in the fish's mouth (17:24-27). Matthew's use of miracles seem to be directed more to their use as proofs of Jesus' Messianic power than to the advancement of a narrative, even though, he duplicates many that appear in Mark and in Luke.

The Gospel of Matthew is didactic in emphasis. It contains the largest single block of discourse material found in the Gospels (chapters 5, 6, and 7), and there are other long passages (chapters 10, 13, 18, 23, 24, 25), which reproduce Jesus' teaching. These discourses comprise about three-fifths

of the entire Gospel. Matthew, evidently wanted to stress the content of Jesus' teaching as related to His person and to the law, in order that the full implication of the Messiah's coming might be clear.

## **Characters**

Matthew lays stress upon the individual actors in his narrative than the other Synoptists do, nor does he introduce many whose names do not appear elsewhere. Joseph (1:18-25), Herod the Great (2:1-16), and the mother of James and John (20:20-21), are given more space than in Mark and in Luke; but, both Mark and Luke use character sketches more than does Matthew.

In general, the characters of Matthew's Gospel are identical with those of Mark, Luke, and John. John the Baptist, Mary (Jesus' mother), the twelve disciples, Caiaphas, the high priests, Pilate, Simon of Cyrene, Joseph of Arimathea, and many minor figures - all play their part in the narrative. They are, however, incidental to the teaching.

## ***SPECIAL FEATURES***

1. Mathew is the Gospel of Discourse.

In each of the sections is one long specimen of discourse, as the following table shows:

<b>Section</b>	<b>Discourse</b>
I. The Prophecies Realized 1:1-4:11	Preaching of John 3:1-12
II. The Principles Announced 4:12; 7:29	The Sermon on the Mount 5:1; 7:29
III. The Power Revealed 8:1; 11:1	The Commission 10:1-42
IV. The Program Explained 11:2; 13:53	The Parables 13:1-52
V. The Purpose Declared 13:54; 19:2	The Meaning of Forgiveness 18:1-35
VI. The Problems Presented 19:3; 26:2	Denunciation and Prediction 23:1; 25:46
VII. The Passion Accomplished 26:3; 28:10	(No discourse: action)
VIII. Epilogue 28:11-20	The Great Commission 28:18-20

## 2. Matthew is the Gospel of the Church

Matthew's Gospel is the only one in which the word, "Church" occurs (16:18, 18:17).

Both of these passages were spoken by Jesus, showing that He had a definite idea of the Church as an institution to come. The very fact that these utterances of His are embodied in Matthew, may indicate that it was written for a young and struggling Church that needed encouragement and discipline.

### 3. Matthew is the Gospel of the King.

Not only is the doctrine of the kingdom emphasized in Matthew, but through all of the Gospel, the royalty of Christ is prominent. The genealogy in the first chapter follows the royal line of Judah. The alarm of Herod was caused because the birth of Jesus introduced a political rival. The entry into Jerusalem stresses His arrival as King, riding peacefully upon an ass's colt (21:5, 7). In the eschatological discourse, He predicts that He will sit "on the throne of His glory" (25:31). The inscription over the cross, placed by Pilate, was, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews" (27:37).

## THE GOSPEL OF MARK

### *ORIGIN*

Of the author of this Gospel, comparatively, little is known. Nowhere does the book mention him by name; and there are very few passages that give any hints concerning his interests and personality, to say nothing of his identity. Tradition identifies him as John Mark, the scion of a Christian family in Jerusalem, the assistant, and understudy of Paul, of Barnabas, and perhaps, of Peter. He was most likely about ten years younger than the apostles, which would have made him about twenty years old at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus. He was the son of Mary, a friend of the apostles, who is mentioned in Acts 12. The prayer meeting for the deliverance of Peter was held in her house, and it is

possible that her home was the headquarters of the Christian leaders in Jerusalem. Evidently, Peter sought it out as his first point of call after his deliverance from jail (Acts 12:12), which may indicate that he felt sure of finding his colleagues there at that time. It may have been in this house that the “upper room” was located where Jesus and His disciples ate the Last Supper, and where the pre-Pentecostal prayer meeting was held. If so, Mark was well acquainted with the leaders of the Christian movement almost from its beginning.

Mark was introduced to the ministry by his cousin, Barnabas, who, after the visit to Jerusalem with Paul, recorded in Acts 11:30, returned to Antioch, taking Mark with him (12:25). When Barnabas and Paul went on the first missionary journey, Mark went along as assistant or understudy (13:5). Mark stayed with them during their work in Cyprus, but when they left Cyprus for the mainland of Asia, he parted from them and returned to Jerusalem (13:13). The reason for this defection is not given, but it seems to be that either he did not feel called to this work or else, that he suffered some emotional reaction. Perhaps, he did not like Paul; perhaps, he was not interested in the Gentile mission. The fact remains that he did not go on with the others.

After the return to Antioch and the subsequent Council of Jerusalem, Barnabas proposed that

John Mark be taken on the next journey. Paul demurred, because Mark “went not with them to the work” (15:37-39). The disagreement between them was so sharp that they severed company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus, while Paul, with a new assistant, went on to Asia.

At this point, probably around 50 A.D., Mark disappeared from the New Testament narrative and did not reappear for ten years. In the Epistle to the Colossians, however, Mark had again, joined Paul’s company at Rome, and the latter had recommended him to the Colossian Church. At a somewhat later time, Paul characterized him as “useful to me for ministering” (II Timothy 4:11). The old disagreement must have been solved; Mark had

evidently recovered himself in Paul's estimation. It is quite likely also, that he was associated with Peter about the same time (I Peter 5:13). Unquestionably, he had been in the Church from its very beginning and had been with its active witness from Jerusalem to Rome in the years between 30 to 65 A.D. Tradition, preserved by Eusebius, says that he founded the Churches of Alexandria.

### ***DATE AND PLACE***

The earliest witnesses to the Gospel of Mark generally connect it with the preaching of Peter in Rome in the seventh decade of the Christian era.

Papias (115 A.D.), as quoted from Eusebius (375 A.D.), said:

“And, John the presbyter, also said this - Mark being the interpreter of Peter, whatsoever he recorded, he wrote with great accuracy, but not, however, in the order in which it was spoken or done by Jesus, for he neither heard nor followed our Lord, but as before said, he was in company with Peter, who gave him such instruction as was necessary, but not to give a history of Jesus' discourses: wherefore, Mark has not erred in anything by writing some things as he has recorded them, for he was carefully attentive to one thing; not to pass by anything he heard, or to state anything falsely in these accounts.”

Eusebius quoted also Clement of Alexandria (180 A.D.) to the effect that Peter's hearers urged Mark to leave a record of the doctrine which Peter had communicated orally, and that Peter authorized the Gospel to be read in the Churches. Origen, Clement's successor, (225 A.D.), is alleged to have said that Mark wrote his Gospel saying that “after the death of Peter and Paul, Mark delivered to us in writing, things preached by Peter.”

It is noteworthy that these all agree on the Markan authorship for the Second Gospel and that they all connect it with the preaching of Peter. The traditions disagree, concerning the relation of the Gospel, to the lifetime of Peter. Irenaeus suggests that the Gospel was written after the death of Peter, possibly between 65 and 68 A.D., whereas, Clement and Origen indicate that it was perfected during Peter's lifetime and authorized by

him. There is no doubt that this Gospel was produced by a man who knew some of the Apostolic band and who had long and direct contact with their preaching.

From the foregoing facts, certain deductions may be drawn:

1. Mark was brought up in the religious atmosphere of Judaism:
2. He may have been an eyewitness of some of the facts recorded in the Gospel that bears his name.
3. He was a close associate of the Apostolic leaders of the early Church, and would have been fully acquainted with their preaching about Jesus.
4. He, himself, had been a participant in the work of preaching, and had witnessed the beginning of the Gentile mission.

To these facts may be added one or two from a consideration of the Gospel.

1. The author stressed facts rather than themes or topics.
2. Possibly, he was a witness of the arrest of Jesus, in the Garden. In Mark 14:51-52, a young man is mentioned, who had followed along with Jesus. No hint of his identity is given, nor is his place in the sequence clear at all. As far as the narrative is concerned, the omission of reference to him would not break its continuity. It is difficult to resist the temptation, to see here, a personal reminiscence of an experience, vivid to the author, but not significant to the main thread of the story. Neither of the other Synoptics records this. If this does not refer to Mark, then he was an eyewitness of the last hours of Jesus' life, and it is quite likely that posterity owes much of the records of those hours to him.
3. In Mark 15:21, there is a reference to Simon the Cyrenian, "the father of Alexander and Rufus." These two men have no part in the story; they are only mentioned here. Why? Probably, because they were well-known to the author as a personal acquaintance.

If so, the date of the Gospel must be set within a generation of the cross, even if it is assumed that these men were children when the crucifixion occurred.

4. Another interesting fact emerges from a comparison of Peter's speech in Acts 10:34-43, with the Gospel. Tradition suggests that Mark was Peter's assistant for a time, and there is some confirmation of it, in I Peter 5:13. It is noteworthy, that the sermon as recorded in Acts, follows closely, the outline of the content of Mark. Did Mark, as tradition asserts that he did, record in his Gospel, the oral preaching of Peter?

From these considerations, it may be concluded that this Gospel is the product of one of the junior preachers of the Apostolic age, who was thoroughly acquainted with the message concerning Jesus and who recorded it as he heard it, without elaboration or embellishments of any kind. He made no attempt at a biographical interpretation; he merely allowed the facts themselves to speak for him. If it were written toward the end of his career, his own experiences would have deepened and enriched his presentation of the message concerning Jesus Christ.

The foregoing discussion of the author has already covered much of the existing evidence concerning the date of this Gospel. It can scarcely have been later than 70 A.D., and may have been composed considerably earlier, if by "composed," is meant, the collection and use of material in it, but not necessarily its publication. The close accord of Mark with Matthew and Luke, in which most of the Gospel material in Mark can be found, has led many to believe that Matthew and Luke used Mark as a source of information and that the written document must have antedated the other two Gospels. Such a conclusion would compel one to believe, either that Mark was early, or that the others were late. If, however, these Gospels are three different written presentations of the Apostolic message, concerning the Lord Jesus Christ as inspired by the Holy Ghost, drawn from the common material which the apostles and their associates preached, there is a good possibility that they may have been produced simultaneously.

The Gospel of Mark is clear, and pointed, a style which would appeal to the Roman mind that was impatient of abstractions and of literary inbreeding. There are many

Latinisms in Mark, such as *modius*, for “bushel (4:21), *census*, for “tribute” (12:14), *speculator*, for “executioner” (6:27, A.V.), *centurio*, for “centurion” (15:39, 44, 45), and others. For most of these were Greek equivalents. Mark, apparently, used the Latin terms because they were more common or more familiar. The Gospel contains little emphasis on Jewish law and customs. When they are mentioned, they are explained more fully than in the other Synoptics. The internal evidence of the Gospel, fits fairly well, the external tradition, that the place of publication may have been Rome. At any rate, Mark was intended for the unevangelized layman of practical Roman mentality.

## **CONTENT**

The Gospel of Mark is a historical narrative, which sets forth a representative picture of the Person and work of Jesus Christ. It is not primarily a biography, for it does not discuss the parentage, the early environment, the birth, the education, or the family of its principle character, nor does it attempt to furnish information about any particular phase of Jesus' life. It gives, in close succession, probably in general chronological order, a series of episodes in Christ's career, with some detail, concerning the last week that He spent on earth. It is almost entirely objective in its approach. Little comment is offered; the narrative tells its own story. If the twelve verses of the Gospel, which are widely regarded as non-Markan, because they do not appear in the text of the oldest manuscripts, be detached, the Gospel ends with singular abruptness. It is brief, pictorial, curt, clear-cut, and forceful. Like a snapshot album, devoted to one person, it gives a series of characteristic poses of Jesus without attempting close continuity between them. Nevertheless, Mark affords a satisfactory understanding of His Person and work when the total impression of these individual episodes are put together.

The subject of the Gospel is adequately summed up in the opening verse, “The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” Whether the words are an ancient heading, given to the Gospel, or whether they are the one chosen by the writer; they are an appropriate introduction to its content. The Person of Christ dominates the

narrative throughout its course. His works are the chief source of interest, and His death and resurrection in Jerusalem, bring the story to a thrilling climax.

There is no attempt to hide or to exaggerate the supernatural element in His life. The miracles are almost connected with some definite human need and are performed for the relief of some emergency, not for mere exhibitionism. There is a steady calm progress on the part of Jesus to the goal set for Himself and there is more than a hint of the surprising denouement in the resurrection

(8:31; 9:31; 10:34). At the end, the reader is left to make his own decision concerning the personality, who is portrayed as man, and yet, as more than man.

## **OUTLINE**

An outline of Mark is difficult to construct because of the impressionistic character of the Gospel. For his effect upon the reader, the author apparently relied more upon the total impact of

the Gospel than he did upon the climactic sequence of sections. The following, however, will afford a fair guide to the structure of the book:

Mark: The Gospel of the Son of God (Mark 1:1).

(Topical Outline)	(Place)	
I. The Preparation		1:2-13
The Forerunner	Nazareth	1:2-8
The Baptism	to	1:9-11
The Temptation	Wilderness	1:12-13
II. The Opening Ministry:		1:14; 5:43
Credentials		

Introduction:		
Works	Galilee	1:14; 2:12
Continuation in Galilee:		
Teaching		2:13; 4:34
Further Ministry:		
Authority	Decapolis	4:35; 55:43
III. The Full Ministry:		
Conflict		6:1; 8:26
Unbelief	Nazareth	6:1-6
Political Danger		6:7-29
Popular Acclaim		
(Retirement)	Desert	6:30-56
Traditionalism		7:1-23
Sensationalism		
(Retirement)	Tyre, Sidon	
	Decapolis	7:24; 8:26
IV. The Closing Ministry:		
Challenge		8:27; 10:31
Revelation to Disciples		
(Retirement)	Caesarea Philippi	8:27; 9:50
Challenge to public	Judea and Perea	10:1-31
V. The Last Journey:		
Cross		10:32; 13:37
Teaching the Disciples	En route to Jerusalem	10:32-45
Healing the Sick	Jericho	10:46-52
Triumphal Entry	Jerusalem	11:1-11
Ministry in Jerusalem		11:12; 12:44
Apocalyptic Prediction		13:1-37

VI. The Passion:		
Catastrophe		14:1; 15:47
The Plot		14:1, 2, 10, 11
The Interlude at Bethany	Bethany	14:3-9
The Last Supper	Jerusalem	14:12-26
Gethsemane		14:27-52
The Trial Before Caiaphas		14:53-65
The Denial by Peter		14:66-72
The Hearing Before Pilate		15:1-20
The Crucifixion		15:21-41
The Burial		15:42-47
VII. The Resurrection:		
Commencement		16:1-8
Postscript		16:9-20

The foregoing outline is given in somewhat more detailed fashion than that of Matthew for the purpose of correlating several elements in the structure of Mark. Unlike Matthew, which follows chiefly the theme of the Messiah, Mark is concerned with the activity of Jesus as the Son of God, who is also the Servant of God. The basic outline is built on the changes in the geographical localities of His ministry. The Gospel says little about any ministry in Jerusalem, prior to the Passion, although Jesus must have been there several times before His last visit. Not until He came to the crisis of His ministry, did He remove from Galilee and the Decapolis. The trips to Tyre and Sidon, or to Caesarea Philippi, were attempts to withdraw from the tumult and the conflict which attended His public ministry, in order that He might have opportunity to pray and to think alone, and to instruct His disciples in the truths which they perceived only too dimly.

The outline shows also, a progression in the thought of Mark. The Greek word, *euthus* or *eutheos*, translated "straightway," "immediately," "forthwith," "anon," is used forty-two times, more times than in all the rest of the New Testament. It conveys the impression that, however varied and detailed Jesus' ministry may have been, He was hurrying

toward some unseen goal which He envisioned, but which was hidden to most of His contemporaries and only faintly perceived by the disciples, at those rare intervals, when His words illuminated their understanding.

The outline attempts to classify the material in Mark. The first section (1:2-13), may be called an introduction, but is more properly an abbreviated account of the preparation of Jesus for His great work. Mark's treatment of this period of Jesus' life is much briefer than that of Matthew and of Luke. There is no genealogy, the preaching of John is stated in its bare elements, and the temptation is not narrated in detail. The entire section deals with the credentials of Jesus, for He was endorsed by John the Baptist, was anointed by the Holy Spirit, and was tested in the wilderness.

The second section (1:14; 5:43), gives the initial impression of being, simply a miscellany of representative events. Actually, it contains a series of demonstrations of Jesus' authority. The miracle of the man, sick with the palsy (2:1-12), which stands at the end of a list of healings, illustrated Jesus' power to forgive sins. The debate with the Pharisees, over picking grain on the Sabbath (2:23-28), coupled with the healing of the man with a withered hand (3:1-6), established the principle of Jesus' lordship of the Sabbath. Jesus' authority over demons is mentioned in several passages (3:11, 20-30; 5:1-20). The storm on the Lake of Galilee revealed His power over the elements of nature (4:35-41). The raising of Jarius' daughter demonstrated His power over death (5:21-24, 35-43). Along with these proofs of Jesus' superiority, Mark records much of His teaching, but the chief stress, in the first part of his narrative, is on the right of Jesus to speak and to act as the Son of God and as the Son of man.

The third section (6:1; 8:26), continues the teachings and miracles of the second, but gives a much larger place to the element of conflict. The unbelief of His fellow townsmen (6:6), the political pressure of Herod, who had executed John the Baptist and who, might consequently, look upon Jesus with suspicion (6:27-29), the danger of popularity, which could easily subvert His divine mission into demagoguery, and the traditionalism of the Pharisees (7:1-23), created pressures that Jesus had to resist. Finally, after one futile attempt to withdraw from the importunate crowds (6:31-34), He retired to Tyre and Sidon,

Gentile territory, where He would not be so well-known (7:24).

Even there, He was asked for assistance. This section, on the full ministry, brings out the lights and shadows of Jesus' work. His compassion on the multitudes, His readiness to minister to the needy, His wisdom in answering questions, are contrasted with the unthinking greediness of the crowds.

The fourth section (8:27; 10:31), commences with Jesus' retirement to Caesarea Philippi. Mark, like the other Synoptics, treats this as the pivotal point of Jesus' career. Jesus challenged His disciples to make a personal confession of faith in Him (8:27). He disclosed to them, for the first time, the necessity of His death, and then, in the transfiguration scene, revealed to them, His real glory. Over and over again, He taught them that He must die and rise again, "but they understood not the saying, and were afraid to ask him" (9:32).

Section five enlarges upon the consequences of this turn in Jesus' affairs by treating the final journey, to the cross. In the teaching, which Jesus gave to the disciples (10:32-40), in the healing of Bartimaeus, who was singled out by being named personally (10:46-52), and in the popular presentation of the dramatic entry into the city (11:1-10), He showed His attitude of service toward God and man. In the controversy with the various religious groups and in the apocalyptic discourse, spoken to the disciples on the Mount of Olives, Jesus laid down the principles of thought and predictions for the future that explained, more perfectly, the outcome of His mission. He emphasized particularly, the divine viewpoint of human life, culminating in His return, at the close of the age. The tragedy of the cross is not minimized by Mark; but, even before he recounts the events of the Passion, he indicated that Jesus would, surmount triumphantly, the apparent disaster that confronted Him.

The section on the Passion (14:1; 15:47), does not vary greatly in its essential facts from the story told in the other Gospels. The last few days of Jesus' life are given, in closer chronological sequence, than any other period of equal length in His life. Certainly, it was the most vivid period and the most important. Mark's plain factual style enhances

the value of the narrative and makes one ask why, so marvelous a Person, with such tremendous authority, should have come to so untimely, an end.

Two answers to this question are given in the Gospel itself. One is the declaration of Jesus in Mark 10:45:

*“For the Son of man also came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom, for many.”*

The tragedy of the Gospel was an inevitable part, Christ’s service to men, and of His redemption of them. The other answer is contained in the last section on the resurrection (16:1-8, 20). The discovery of the empty tomb was proof that something had happened in Joseph’s garden that could not be explained on any purely naturalistic basis. The positive testimony of the angel and the sudden terror of the women, prove that the unexpected had happened and that Jesus had really risen.

The genuineness of the last twelve verses of Mark has been disputed on textual grounds, for several of the oldest and most generally reliable manuscripts omit them entirely. Several endings are in existence, though the one which is familiar, is the best of all of them. In any case, it represents an account which can be traced back to the end of the second century, and it bears strong affinities to the other accounts of the resurrection, so that there is good reason for believing that it contains authentic information. If Mark himself wrote it, he probably added it as an epilogue, since it begins with a description of what he has already stated in the first eight verses. It stresses the disbelief of the disciples (16:11, 13, 14, 16), as if to say that, even after the crowning demonstration of Jesus’ authority over death, many were still incredulous and needed an added exhortation to faith.

### ***EMPHASIS***

As noted already, Mark is a Gospel of action. It has no prologue, except for the title. Direct citations from the Old Testament, for purposes of prophetic interpretation, are very

few, although there are many quotations and allusions. Of seventy parables and parabolic utterances in the Gospels, Mark has only eighteen, though some of them comprise only a sentence apiece. Mark gives more space to the miracles than does any other Gospel; for he records eighteen out of the possible total of thirty-five.

Mark is a Gospel of personal reactions. All through its pages, are recorded the responses of Jesus' audiences. They were "amazed" (1-27), critical (2:7), afraid (4:41), puzzled (6:14), astonished (7:37), bitterly hostile (14:1). There are at least twenty-three such references. The narrative presents its own appeal, and in the reflection of the popular mind, one can see the evaluation of modern attitudes to Jesus. Mark also records many interviews of Jesus, and even observations of His personal gestures (3:5, 5:41, 7:33, 8:23, 9:27, 10:16).

All of these touches and others, make Mark the Gospel of vividness. There are one hundred fifty-one uses of the historic present tense of the verb in Mark and many uses of the imperfect tense, both of which, portray action, as in process, rather than simply, as an event. Vivid phrases occur frequently: "The spirit *driveth* him forth into the wilderness" (1:12); "when they had *broken it up* (the roof)" (2:4); "the unclean spirits....*fell down* before him" (3:11); "the waves beat into the boat, insomuch that the boat *was not filling*" (4:37); "he commanded them that all should sit down by companies *upon the green grass*" (6:39). The italicized phrases, are a few samples, taken at random from the text, to illustrate the vigor and freshness of the Markan style - a style, which shows unquestionably, the oral testimony of an eyewitness, who was telling exactly what he saw as it affected him and others.

The purpose of the Gospel of Mark seems to be primarily evangelistic. It is an attempt to bring the person and work of Christ before the public as a new message, "the Gospel," without assuming much knowledge of theology or of Old Testament teaching on the part of the hearer. Its brief anecdotes, its epigrammatic sentences, its pointed application of truth, are just what a street preacher would use in telling of Christ to a promiscuous crowd. Although, the Gospel is not primarily literary in style, it is integrated by the Person of whom it speaks, and it gives a picture of

Christ that is factual and inescapable.

## ***CHARACTERS***

Mark does not specialize in character sketches, although many of the personalities in his pages are etched more sharply than are those in Matthew. The young man in the Garden, who escaped from the soldiery (14:51-52), Alexander and Rufus (15:21), Simon the leper (14:3), are mentioned as acquaintances of the author. Mark does not mention as many persons as does Luke, nor does he use them as patterns to the same extent that Luke and John do. He seems to have been more interested in the progress of his story, than in the analysis of individual characters. The naming of these persons, suggests that later, they may have become celebrities in the Christian community, prior to the writing of this Gospel.

## **THE GOSPEL OF LUKE**

### ***ORIGIN***

Of the three Synoptic Gospels, Luke affords the greatest amount of information, concerning its own beginning. Its author, who does not give his own name, supplied a literary introduction, stating his aims in writing it, the methods that he employed, and his relationships to his contemporaries, who had attempted the same thing. This introduction, (Luke 1:1-4), is the key to the book, and to the book of Acts also, if Luke-Acts, be regarded as a unit.

From the introduction, a number of inferences may be drawn as follows:

1. In the same time of the writer, a number of works were extant, which contained only a partial, or possibly, a garbled account of Jesus' life and work. The writer would not

have written a Gospel of his own, had he been perfectly satisfied, with any of those that he knew.

2. These accounts had attempted some systematic arrangement of available facts (“to draw up a narrative” - 1:1).

3. These facts were well-known to the Christian world, and were accepted independently, of the narratives. Luke says that they “have been fulfilled among us” (1:1).

4. The writer, felt himself, at least, as well informed as the others, and as capable of writing an account on his own responsibility (“it seemed good to me, also”).

5. Luke’s information came from reliable official sources (“who, from the beginning, were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word” - 1:2).

6. He was conversant with the facts, either by observation or by inquiry, and he was certainly, a contemporary of the main course of action, in the sense, that he lived in the generation of those who had witnessed it. His knowledge of Christ went back over a number of years of his life, during which, he had associated with apostles, eyewitnesses, and possibly, with personal friends or relatives of the Lord Jesus. The urge of the Holy Ghost, which made him a writer, controlled the choice of the incidents that he recorded and the language in which he wrote them.

7. Luke’s knowledge covered all of the major facts. His Gospel contains many particulars, which do not appear in the others, and is the most generally representative life, of Christ.

8. He professed to write accurately and in logical order. His use of the term, “in order,” does not necessarily, presuppose chronological order, but it does mean that he had a definite plan of procedure and that he intended to adhere to it.

9. Luke’s addressee, was probably, a man of the upper class, who may be called

here, by his baptismal name, Theophilus, which meant literally, “lover of God” or “loved by God.” The epithet, “most excellent,” was generally applied, only to officials or to members of the aristocracy. Perhaps, he was a convert of Luke, or a patron, who assumed responsibility for circulating Luke’s works.

10. This addressee had already been informed, orally, concerning Christ, perhaps through the preaching that he had heard, but he needed further instruction to stabilize him and to convince him of the truth.

11. Luke’s obvious purpose, was to give to his friend, complete knowledge of the truth.

From the foregoing deductions, one may conclude, that the author was a man who possessed literary gifts and who knew how to make use of them in presenting the message of Christ.

## ***AUTHOR***

The identity of the author depends upon the relation of the Third Gospel to the Book of Acts. If Luke and Acts were written by the same person, one can apply to Luke, such evidence concerning the author as may be internal to Acts, and vice versa. In Acts, the author was undoubtedly, a participant in many of the events that he described, for he used frequently, the pronoun, “we.” The “we sections,” have become a useful guide for determining the interests, character, and possible, identity of the writer.

The first, generally accepted reference, begins with Acts 16:10, at Paul’s departure from Troas on his second missionary journey. The writer, accompanied him from Troas to Philippi, where the references to the first person plural cease, with the discussion of Paul’s imprisonment (16:17, 19:34). Probably, the writer was present at Philippi, but was not arrested. The “we sections,” reappear at Paul’s return to Macedonia, as recorded in Acts 20:6. From this point, the “we sections,” remain throughout the book, although the writer

does not seem to be in evidence, during the imprisonment of Paul at Caesarea. Nevertheless, he accompanied Paul on the voyage to Rome (27:1-2), and stayed with him until the end of the story.

The relation of Luke to Acts is close. Both documents are addressed to the same person, Theophilus. The introduction to Acts dovetails, exactly with the content of Luke, when it says that, "the former treatise" concerned "all that Jesus began, both to do and to teach" (Acts 1:1). The stress on the resurrection and on the teaching ministry of the forty days, accords well with the content of Luke 24. The emphasis in Acts, on the place of the Holy Spirit, is exactly like that of the Gospel. The case for the unity of Luke-Acts, seems to be fairly established. Such facts, then, as are true of the writer of Acts, will be equally true of the writer of Luke, and may legitimately be used to fix his identity.

Accordingly, the writer of Luke-Acts, may have been an Antiochian Gentile, converted in Antioch, not more than fifteen years after Pentecost. He became a friend and associate of Paul and traveled with him on the second missionary journey after meeting him at Troas (Acts 16:10). He remained at Philippi as pastor of the Church while Paul pursued his ministry in Achaia and, after a visit to Antioch, (18:22), in Asia Minor (19:1-41). When Paul returned to Philippi on the third journey, the writer joined his company again (20:6). He went with him to the mainland of Asia and then accompanied him to Jerusalem.

The four years of Paul's imprisonment give no reference to the writer's activities during that time, but at the close of the period, he accompanied Paul to Rome, where he was about to stand trial before Caesar.

This man, whose diary forms the best source for knowledge about the missionary travels of Paul, must have been a close associate of the great apostle. Of the known traveling companions of this period, none fit's the requirements, save Luke. Identification is established by process of elimination. The author was not Timothy, nor any of those mentioned in Acts 20:4-6, for obviously, the writer and Paul did not accompany these on their trip from Philippi to Troas, but went later. If the lists of associates in Colossians (4:7-17) and Philemon (23, 24), be used, Aristarchus, can be eliminated as one of the list in

Acts 20; Mark is not the writer, since in Acts, he is mentioned in the third person; Epaphras' field of labor was not Philippi, but the cities of Asia Minor; Demas ended his course in disgrace (II Timothy 4:10); Jesus Justus, evidently was Jewish by ancestry, whereas the writer of Acts was not. Only Luke remains as a possibility.

Internal evidence has some bearing on this conclusion. The writer possessed high literary ability and was probably, well educated. His language shows a definite Greek turn of mind. For instance, his use of the word, "barbarians" in Acts 28:2, does not imply that the inhabitants of Malta were crude savages, but it means only that they were not Greek-speaking people. He was a keen observer, for the twenty-seventh chapter of Acts gives the best account of ancient shipping that has come down from antiquity. A comparison of Mark 5:25-26, with Luke 8:43, shows that he had some interest in a physician's viewpoint, which would confirm the title given to Luke in Colossians 4:14: "Luke, the beloved physician."

External tradition also supports the conclusion that Luke was the writer of the Third Gospel. Justin Martyr, of the second century, used this Gospel. Tatian employed it in the Diatessaron. Marcion included a revised form of it in his canon; and from the end of the second century onward, it was widely quoted as Lukan. Tertullian alone, quoted or alluded, to the Lukan text more than five hundred times.

Since the identity of the author is reasonably well-established, some notice should be taken of his character and of his achievements.

He was a Greek-speaking Gentile by birth, who had received a good education and who possessed considerable intellectual ability. He was probably one of the early converts of the first mission in Antioch. Nothing is known directly of his life until he met Paul at Troas, about 51 A.D. From Troas, he went with Paul to Macedonia, where he became pastor of the Philippian Church that was distinguished for its zeal and for its loyalty to the founder. Perhaps, the "brother," mentioned in II Corinthians 8:22, is a reference to Luke. He may have been a blood-brother of

Titus, who was himself, connected with Antioch at an early date (Galatians 2:3). Corinthians suggests that this “brother” was of good repute in Achaia and that he was noted for his fame in the Gospel. If the reference concerns Luke, he may have acted as Paul’s representative all through Macedonia and Achaia, while making headquarters at Philippi.

When Paul returned to Philippi on his third missionary journey, Luke rejoined him and went on with him to Palestine. During Paul’s stay in the city of Jerusalem and the imprisonment in Caesarea, no mention is made of Luke; but, he cannot have been far away, for he shared the journey to Rome and wrote the record of the shipwreck (Acts 27), where he was classed among the “fellow workers.” From this point, the data are extremely fragmentary, and uncertain. He seems to have been with Paul during the last imprisonment that immediately preceded his death (II Timothy 4:1).

Luke was not a spectator, viewing Christian truth from outside, but he was an active preacher and missionary himself. He was the first great Church historian and literary apologist for Christianity. As an associate of Paul, his work might be expected to reflect the knowledge of Christ, that was used in the preaching to the Gentiles.

### ***DATE AND PLACE***

The writing of Luke must have been written before Acts, and after the development of Christianity, to the point, where it could attract the attention of a Gentile inquirer, like Theophilus.

The date of 60 A.D., would serve as a median date, for by that time, Luke would have been a Christian, at least ten years or more, and would have traveled Palestine, where he could have met many of those who had known Jesus in the flesh. He may have occupied the time, while Paul was in prison, by investigating the background of the life of Jesus, concerning whom, he had heard so much and for whom, he himself, had been a missionary.

No clue is given in this Gospel, concerning its place of writing. Probably, it was written outside of Palestine, though it may have been composed at Caesarea. Most suggestions, including Rome, Caesarea, Achaia, Asia Minor, and Alexandria, are mere guesses. There is not even any good early tradition relating to the place of its origin. All that can be said, is that it was written somewhere in the Hellenistic world, by a man who worked among Gentiles.

## **CONTENT**

In general, organization of the Gospel of Luke, follows the main sequence of events, as given in Matthew and in Mark, with many unique additions. The accounts of the birth of John the Baptist (1:5-25, 57-80), and the birth and childhood of Jesus (1:26-56, 2:1-52), the genealogy (3:23-38), the preaching at Nazareth (4:16-30), the special summons to Peter (5:8-10), six miracles (5:1-11, 7:11-17, 13:10-17, 14:1-6, 17:11-19, 22:49-51), nineteen parables (7:41-43, 10:30-37, 11:5-8, 12:13-21, 12:35-40, 12:41-48, 13:6-9, 14:7-11, 14:16-24, 14:28-30, 14:31-32, 15:8-10, 15:11-32, 16:1-13, 16:19-31, 17:7-10, 18:1-8, 18:9-14, 19:11-27), the story of the encounter with Zacchaeus (19:1-10), the mocking of Jesus by Herod (23:8-12), and the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus on the road to Emmaus (24:13-35), are all major additions in Luke's Gospel. There are many other features peculiar to Luke which are too detailed and too numerous to mention.

## **OUTLINE**

The material of Luke is organized around the central concept of Jesus as a member of humanity, who lived the perfect and representative life of the Son of man through the power of the Holy Spirit. The development of this concept, is rooted in Luke 2:11, where the child was announced as "a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." The first of these titles, speaks of His mission; the second and third identify Him, as the Messiah of Judaism.

## Luke: The Gospel of the Saviour of Men

I. The Preface	1:1-4
II. The Preparation for the Saviour	1:5; 2:52
The Annunciations	1:5-56
The Birth of John	1:57-80
The Birth and Childhood of Jesus	2:1-52
III. The Introduction of the Saviour	3:1; 4:15
The Ministry of John	3:1-20
The Baptism	3:21-22
The Genealogy	3:23-38
The Temptation	4:1-13
The Return to Galilee	4:14-15
IV. The Ministry of the Saviour	4:16; 9:50
The Announcement of Purpose	4:16-44
The Manifestation of Power	5:1; 6:11
The Appointment of Helpers	6:12-19
His Declaration of Principles	6:20-49
His Ministry of Compassion	7:1; 9:17
His Revelation of the Cross	9:18-50
V. The Mission of the Saviour	9:51; 18:30
The Public Challenge	9:51-62
The Appointment of the Seventy	10:1-24
The Teaching of the Kingdom	10:25; 13:21
The Rise of Public Conflict	13:22; 16:31
The Instruction of the Disciples	17:1; 18:30
VI. The Passion of the Saviour	18:31; 23:56

Events En route to Jerusalem	18:31; 19:27
Arrival at Jerusalem	19:28-44
Conflict at Jerusalem	19:45; 21:4
Predictions Concerning Jerusalem	21:5-38
The Last Supper	22:1-38
The Betrayal	22:39-53
The Arrest and Trial	22:54; 23:25
The Crucifixion	23:26-49
The Burial	23:50-56
VII. The Resurrection of the Saviour	24:1-53
The Empty Tomb	24:1-12
The Appearance at Emmaus	24:13-35
The Manifestation to the Disciples	24:36-43
The Commission	24:44-49
The Ascension	24:50-53

The section on the preparation of the Saviour contains material that is not duplicated in the other Gospels. Matthew states, that Jesus was born of a virgin, but he tells the story from the viewpoint of Joseph, whereas Luke, tells it from the viewpoint of Mary. Nothing concerning the birth of John the Baptist can be found in Matthew or in Mark.

The third section, the introduction of Jesus to His full ministry, opened with a direct connection with history, as if to show that He was not an idealized religious figure, but a very real participant in the history of mankind, who could be localized in time and space. The genealogy is traced from Adam, and emphasizes human descent, rather than the royal line. The account of the temptation is closely akin to that of Matthew, except in order. Luke calls attention to the fact that the devil had “completed every temptation” (4:13), as if he wished to indicate that Jesus met all the representative temptations of humanity.

In opening the fourth section on the ministry of Jesus, Luke records the sermon in Nazareth in which Jesus announced His relation to the prophetic Scripture. He set the

proclamation of “the acceptable year of the Lord,” as the goal of His ministry. The subsequent biographical material is quite similar to that which is found at this point in the other Synoptics, though Luke has added many individual touches.

The fifth section is peculiarly Lukan. With the exception of occasional paragraphs, very little of the text between Luke 9:51 and 18:30 occurs in the other Gospels. The parables, the good Samaritan (10:28-37), the rich fool (12:13-21), the fruitless fig tree (13:6-9), the seats at the marriage feast (14:7-14), the great supper (14:15-24), the lost coin (15:8-10), the prodigal son (15:11-32), the unjust steward (16:1-13), the rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31), the Pharisees and the publican (18:9-14), are found only in Luke. Although they seem, at first reading, to be a random collection of Jesus’ parables, they are illustrative of the meaning of His mission. Each parable or narrative is a specimen of Luke’s use of fresh material from the life of Christ to explain His significance for Gentile readers.

Luke’s narrative of the Passion, contains no large single paragraphs that deviate greatly from the general pattern of the Synoptic narrative, as a whole. The order of the Last Supper (22:19-23), Jesus’ comfort of Simon Peter (22:31-32), the episode of the blood-like sweat (22:43-44), the arrangement of the events in the house of Caiaphas (22:63-71), the appearance of Jesus before Herod (23:4-16), Jesus’ address to the women of Jerusalem (23:27-31) the penitent thief (23:39-43), add to the pictorial quality of the story, but do not alter its progress or meaning. The human sufferings and the human sympathies of Jesus were stressed by Luke as he showed how the Son of man endured the cross in obedience to the Father.

The account of the resurrection is strikingly new and different. The reality is the same as in the other Gospels, but the appearance of Jesus to the two men on the way to Emmaus, clinches the argument of this Gospel for certainty. The actuality of Jesus’ death, the despair of the disciples, the unexpected and convincing manifestation of His living presence, His interpretation of the Scriptures in terms of Himself, and the spiritual conviction, which seized upon them as He spoke to them, were all compelling evidence that in the Person of Christ, something new had happened on the earth. The concluding

words of the Gospel connected the historical reality with doctrinal truth and show that the revelation, through Christ, is the basis for the preaching of repentance and of forgiveness of sins.

### ***EMPHASIS***

Tradition says, that Luke was an artist, and that he painted pictures for the early Church. Whether he ever painted on canvas may be uncertain, but unquestionably, he was an artist in words. He is the most literary of the Gospel writers; his stories, as he took them from the lips of Jesus, or as he told them himself, are gems of expression and his vocabulary is rich and varied. Four beautiful songs or poems are found in his work, which have come down to the modern day as hymns of the Church: the *Magnificent* (1:46-55), the song of Mary when she went to visit Elizabeth; the *Benedictus* (1:67-79), spoken by Zacharias at the birth of John the Baptist; the *Gloria in Excelsis* (2:14) of the heavenly host at the birth of Jesus; and the *Nunc Dimittis*, Simeon's prayer at the dedication of the infant Jesus (2:28-32).

The Gospel of Luke is predominantly historical. No other writer gives dating for his narrative as Luke does in 1:5, 2:1, and 3:1, 2. No other writer attempts so complete, a sketch of the career of Jesus Christ, and birth to death, even though many periods of His life are not discussed in detail. Luke looks at Christ through the eyes of a cosmopolitan, for whom there is neither Jew nor Gentile, Greek nor barbarian, bond, nor free. Luke is impartial, in the best sense, of that term. His history is not a dull chronicle of happenings, but is a live interpretation written unto an integral whole by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

Doctrine is emphasized in the third Gospel. Luke could scarcely have traveled with Paul and have ministered as a pastor and missionary without being aware of the importance of doctrinal teaching. Although he does not discuss theology topically, his vocabulary reveals his knowledge of it and his interest in it. The Person of Christ, the son of God, who was acknowledged by the angels (1:35), by demons (4:41), by the Father

(9:35), is presented both, as deity and as humanity. Salvation is a prominent teaching in Luke: "...the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (19:10), is a key sentence in the book; and several of the parables, particularly those of the fifteenth chapter, illustrate the meaning of salvation. The word "justify," which is used so frequently by Paul, appears several times in Luke-Acts, though, not always, in a theological sense. Like the other Gospels, Luke lays a foundation for theology, rather than developing it as a subject, but the doctrine of the Person of Christ, the nature and meaning of repentance, salvation, sin, justification, redemption, and many others, are patent to the reader.

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is given special prominence: in fact, there are more references to the Holy Spirit in Luke than there are in Matthew and Mark combined. All of the chief actors of the Gospel, John the Baptist, Mary, Elizabeth, Zacharias, Simeon, and the Lord Jesus Himself, were empowered for their work by the Holy Spirit. The whole life of Jesus was lived by the Spirit. He was conceived by the Spirit (1:35), and He expected that His disciples would complete His work in the power of the Spirit (24:49). Acts, of course, carried this theme to its fuller development, by showing the nature and extent of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

Certain classes of people receive marked attention in this Gospel. Luke has much to say about women; the word "woman" occurs forty-three times, and only forty-nine times in Matthew and Mark combined. The character of Mary, Jesus' mother, is treated more fully in Luke than in Matthew. Elizabeth, the mother of John (1:5-6, 39-45, 57), and Anna the prophetess (2:36-38), the company of women that traveled among Jesus' disciples (8:2-3), the women who mourned His execution (23:27-28), and the women who were present at the cross and at the tomb (23:55-56, 24:1-11), were all noted. Children receive more prominence in Luke than is usual in the annals of antiquity. The birth and infancy of Jesus and of John are omitted completely by Mark; Luke gives three chapters to them. Three times, Luke mentions that Jesus performed a miracle on an only child (7:12, 8:42, 9:38). In his pages, Jesus appears as the champion of the poor and oppressed. Seven or eight of His parables, either are concerned with the contrast of poverty and wealth, or stress economic need (7:41-43, 11:5-8, 12:13-21, 15:3-10, 16:1-13, 18:1-8). All of these parables belong exclusively to Luke. The portrayal of the rich, in the story of the rich man and

Lazarus and in the parable of the rich fool, is not complimentary, though it is not bitter. Although Luke himself belonged to the upper middle class, he associated voluntarily with the lower classes, and his Gospel was written to apply Christ to their needs.

## **CHARACTERS**

Several new characters appear in the Gospel of Luke. Zacharias and Elizabeth his wife, Simeon, Anna, Zacchaeus, and Clopas, are not mentioned elsewhere, and each is a distinct type. Luke's literary characters are as interesting as his historical characters. Who could forget the patient and loving father of Luke 15 and his sons, one willful and irresponsible, the other haughty and unbending (15:11-32)? The Samaritan, who risked his life and purse to rescue the Jewish stranger beaten by robbers (10:30-37), the idle rich man, who was gloating over his prosperity (12:13-21), the shrewd steward, who rescued an income for himself from the wreck of his stewardship (16:1-13), and the snobbish Pharisee, who prayed ostentatiously, in the temple courts (18-9-14), are all types, true to life. They may very well have been taken by Jesus from individual cases that He had observed and have been preserved for us in Luke's vivid Gospel.

The cumulative effect of Luke's Gospel is precisely that which is expressed in the purpose stated by the writer. The narrative is so real and so well expressed that it makes one see Jesus as an actual figure of history, not just as the subject of an abstract essay. Luke 19:10, "For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost," is amply illustrated by the Gospel of Luke. It portrays Jesus as the Son of man, showing how He lived among men, how He estimated them, and what He did for them.

## **THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**

### **ORIGIN**

The Gospel of John is the most unusual and perhaps, the most valuable member of the

quartet of canonical Gospels. Although it deals with the same sequence of events to be found in the pages of the others, it is quite different in structure and in style. John contains one parable and only seven miracles, five of which, are not recorded anywhere else. The discourses of Jesus in it are concerned chiefly with His Person, rather than with the ethical teaching of the kingdom. Personal interviews

are multiplied, and Jesus' relationship to individuals, is stressed more than His general contact with the public. The Gospel of John is strongly theological, and it deals particularly, with the nature of His Person and with the meaning of faith, in Him.

Because of the marked differences between John and the Synoptics, its truthfulness has been questioned. The answer lies in its origin and purpose. Traditionally, it was written by John, the son of Zebedee, the last surviving member of the Apostolic band, while he was spending his declining years at Ephesus. Although this opinion has been persistently attacked, it still remains as good a probability as any other hypothesis that can be afforded. So little is known concerning the Christian Churches, at large, at the end of the first century, that the framework for this Gospel is exceedingly difficult to reconstruct.

The earliest evidence for its existence is to be found in Papias, as quoted by Eusebius. In this passage, he alluded to John, who was one of the disciples of Jesus, and also to an elder John, a disciple of the Lord, who was his contemporary. Eusebius deduced that the two persons were different individuals, and cited the existence of two tombs in Ephesus, both of which, were called John's, in his day. Since Papias' works are now extant, no independent judgment can be formed on the meaning of this statement. Possibly Eusebius misunderstood him. There is no reason why an apostle could not have also been called an elder and Papias may simply have been saying, that whereas the majority of the apostles did not survive their oral testimony, one or two of them remained until his day, as the last witnesses in the flesh of what Jesus had said and done.

The theory that the Fourth Gospel was the product of some unknown presbyter by the name of John, and not of John, the apostle, cannot be regarded as established. All the testimony of the fathers, from the time of Irenaeus, is overwhelmingly in favor of the

Johannine authorship. Clement of Alexandria (190 A.D.), Origen (220 A.D.), Hippolytus (225 A.D.), Tertullian (200 A.D.), and the Muratorian Fragment (170 A.D.), agree in attributing the Fourth Gospel to John, the son of Zebedee.

## ***AUTHOR***

From the Gospel itself, certain facts about its author may be found. First, he was a Jew, who was accustomed to thinking in Aramaic, although the Gospel was written in Greek. Very few subordinate clauses appear in its text, and not infrequently, Hebrew or Aramaic words are inserted and then explained. The author was familiar with Jewish tradition. In 1:19-28, he referred to the Jewish expectation of a coming Messiah. He knew the Jewish feeling toward the Samaritans (4:9), and their exclusive attitude in worship (4:20). He was acquainted with the Jewish feasts, which he explained carefully for the readers.

Second, he was a Palestinian Jew, who had personal acquaintance with the land and especially with Jerusalem and its environs (9:7, 11:18, 18:1). He was familiar with the cities of Galilee (1:44, 2:1) and with the territory of Samaria (4:5, 6, 21). He seems to have been quite at home in the country which he described.

Again, he was an eyewitness of the events which he recorded. Both in 1:14, "we beheld his glory....," and in 19:35, where he spoke in the third person, "he that hath seen hath borne witness," he claims to be stating what had been part of his personal experience. Small touches scattered through the Gospel confirm this impression. The hour at which Jesus sat on the well curb (4:6), the number and size of the pots at the wedding of Cana (2:6), the weight and value of the ointment that Mary used on Jesus (12:3, 5), the details of Jesus' trial (chapters 18, 19), are points which have little to do with the main narrative, but which indicate the observer's eye.

Who was the author? Evidently, he was with Jesus from the very first of His career, for he mentions episodes that antedate the opening of the account of Jesus' ministry in the

Synoptics. He must have belonged to the group of disciples mentioned in the narrative. According to the final chapter, he is to be identified with the “beloved disciple,” who was a close associate of Peter, and who had been very near to Jesus at the Last Supper (13:23), at the trial (18:15-16), and at the cross (19:26-27). Only one of Jesus’ most intimate associates would fit these circumstances. James was killed early in the history of the Church (Acts 12:2). Peter, Thomas, and Philip are mentioned so frequently in the third person, that no one of them could have been the author. Although the author did not name himself, he took for granted that his readers knew who he was and that they would accept his authority in the matters of which he wrote. John, the son of Zebedee, is the best remaining possibility, and on the assumption of his authorship of the Gospel, the following conclusions are founded.

The biography of John is fragmentary like all other Biblical biographies. He was one of the sons of Zebedee (Mark 1:19-20), a fisherman of Galilee, and of Salome, who was probably the sister of Mary, Jesus’ mother (Matthew 27:56, Mark 15:40, John 19:25). He grew to manhood in Galilee and was a partner with his brother and with Andrew and Peter in the fishing business. He may have belonged, first to the disciples of John the Baptist, and possibly, was the companion of Andrew, mentioned in John 1:40. If so, he accompanied Jesus on His first tour in Galilee (John 2:2), and later with his partners, quit the fishing business, to follow Jesus (Matthew 4:21, 22).

The episodes of Jesus’ life, in which John shared, are too numerous to list and treat separately. He was with Jesus in Jerusalem during the early Judean ministry. He was a participant later in the mission of the Twelve, as described by Matthew (10:1-2). He needed Jesus’ council as much as any other of the Twelve, for he and James seem to have possessed unusually ardent temperaments. Jesus called them, “sons of thunder,” or by a more literal rendering, “sons of tumult” (Mark 3:17).

Mark does not assign any reason for the giving of this name to them, but the usage of the Hebrew phrase, “son of .....,” usually means that the term which completes it qualifies the man, as “sons of Belial,” means “worthless fellows.” Their bigotry and truculence were revealed in their readiness to rebuke the man casting out demons because he did not

follow with them (Luke 9:49), and in their desire to call down fire from heaven upon the Samaritan villages that would not receive Jesus (9:52-54). Both, rashly asked their mother, to petition Jesus that He would grant them the seats of primacy in His kingdom (Matthew 20:20-28). These crudities of spirit, even though a motive of loyalty to Him and to His work, may have activated them and were sharply rebuked by Jesus.

At the Last Supper, John occupied a place of privilege and of intimacy next to Jesus (John 13:23). At the trial, he obtained access to the court of the high priest because he was known to the family (18:15-16). He witnessed the trial and death of Jesus and assumed the responsibility for Jesus' mother, when Jesus committed her to his care (19:26-27). He stayed with Peter during the dark days of the interment, and with him was one of the first visitors at the empty tomb. There, as he looked at the empty grave clothes, he "saw and believed." (20:8).

The epilogue of this Gospel hints that he lived for a long time after the beginning of the Christian era, for an explanation of his long life, would scarcely have been necessary, otherwise. The Epistles show that he rose to a position of influence in the Church and that he became a powerful expositor of the love of God, as revealed in Christ. His death probably took place at the close of the first century.

From these scattered items of John's biography, woven into the general narrative of the life of Christ, one can see something of his personal spiritual experiences. Intense in nature, he gave to Christ, an undivided loyalty, which at times, expressed itself crudely and rashly. As Jesus tamed his ardor and purified it of unrestrained violence, John became the "apostle of love," whose devotion was not excelled by that of any other writer of the New Testament. The fire of his nature appears in the vigor of his language. John echoes the strictures of Jesus against unbelievers (8:44), when he calls them "children of the devil," (1 John 3:10). The same man, however, said: "Beloved, let us love one another: for the love of God; and everyone that loveth, is begotten of God and knoweth God" (4:7). The two are not inconsistent to an intense nature. John is the example of a man who could have been a great sinner, out of whom Christ, made a great witness.

## **DATE AND PLACE**

The date of the Fourth Gospel has been estimated from 40 A.D., to 140 A.D., or even later. It cannot be later than Tatian's Diatessaron, into which it was incorporated about the middle of the second century. The discovery of the Tylands fragment, which preserves a scrap from John 18:31-33, 37, 38, shows that John was probably in use, in the first half of the second century. Goodenough states, that John may have been written as early as 40 A.D., though few scholars accept so early a date. The best solution seems to be, that John was produced in Asia Minor, possibly in Ephesus, toward the close of the first century, when the Church had achieved a measure of maturity, and when there was need for an advance in the teaching concerning the nature of faith. It was apparently written in Gentile surroundings, for the feasts and usages of the Jew, are explained for the benefit of those who were unfamiliar with them (John 2:13, 4:9, 19:31).

## **CONTENT**

The key to the content of the Gospel of John is the author's own statement in John 20:30, 31:

*Many other signs, therefore, did Jesus, in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye, many have life in his name.*

Three words are prominent in this brief passage: *signs, believe, life*. The first of these words contains a clue to the organization of the Gospel around a select number of miracles, parallel in general character, to those which are recorded in the Synoptic Gospels, but called *signs* here, because of their special meaning in this Gospel. Seven are named, which were performed by Jesus publicly on other people or for the benefit of other people. They illustrate different areas of His power, and collectively bear witness to the central doctrine of the Gospel, His deity. They are classified as follows:

Title	Passage	Area of Power
The Changing of Water into Wine	2:1-11	Quality
The Healing of the Nobleman's Son	4:46-54	Space
The Healing of the Impotent Man	5:1-9	Time
The Feeding of the Five Thousand	6:1-14	Quantity
The Walking on the Water	6:16-21	Natural Law
The Healing of the Blind Man	9:1-12	Misfortune
The Raising of Lazarus	11:1-46	Death

These seven miracles operated precisely in the areas where man is unable to effect any change of laws or conditions which affect his life. In those areas, Jesus proved Himself potent where man is impotent, and the works that He did, testify to His supernatural ability.

The second word, *believe*, is the key word in the Gospel, occurring ninety-eight times. It is customarily translated *believe*, though sometimes, it is rendered *trust* or *commit*. It usually means, acknowledgement of a personal claim, or else it stands for the complete commitment of the individual to Christ. In it, is the full meaning of the whole Christian life, for the tense of the verb used in this passage implies the continuing process of belief, involving also progress. John defines belief in Christ, as receiving Him (1:12), making Him a part of one's life. Convinced by the *signs*, which were proofs of the power of Jesus' Person, the believer would logically move on to a settled faith.

The third word in the key to the Gospel of John, is *life*, which in Johannine language, is the sum total of all that is imparted to the believer in his salvation. It is the highest experience of which humanity is capable. "This," said Jesus, "is life eternal, that they should know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, *even Jesus Christ*" (17:3). Life, according to John, is not just animal vitality or the course of human existence. It involves a kind of nature, a new consciousness, interaction with environment, and

constant development. Christ is presented as the example of this life, which is God's gift to the Christian and God's goal for the Christian.

These three words, *signs*, *belief*, *life*, provide logical organization for the Gospel. In the *signs*, is the revelation of God; in *belief*, is the reaction that they are designed to produce; in *life*, is the result that belief brings.

## **OUTLINE**

The development of the central theme of belief appears in the outline of the Gospel.

### **John: The Gospel of Belief**

I. The Prologue	1:1-18
The Theme Stated: Belief	
II. The Period of Consideration	1:19-4:54
The Presentation of the Object of Belief	
The Testimony of John's Witness	1:19-51
The Testimony of Jesus' Works	2:1-22
The Testimony of Jesus' Words	2:23-24
III. The Period of Controversy	5:1; 6:71
The Issues of Belief and of Unbelief	
Presented in Action	5:1-18
Presented in Argument	5:19-47
Presented in Demonstration	6:1-21
Presented in Discourse	6:22-71
IV. The Period of Conflict	7:1-1

The Clash of Belief and of Unbelief	
The Conflict Described	7:1; 8:59
With Jesus' brethren	7:1-9
With the populace	7:10-52
The woman taken in adultery	7:53; 8:11
With the Pharisees and Jews	8:12-59
The Conflict Illustrated	9:1; 11:53
By the blind man	9:1-41
By the discourse on the Shepherd	10:1-21
By argument	10:22-42
By the raising of Lazarus	11:1-53
V. The Period of Crisis	11:54; 12:36
The Declaration of Belief and of Unbelief	
VI. The Period of Conference	12:36; 17:26
The Strengthening of Belief	
Transition	12:36; 13:30
Conference with the Disciples	13:31; 16:33
Conference with the Father	17:1-26
VII. The Period of Consummation	18:1; 20:31
The Victory over Unbelief	
The Betrayal	18:1-27
The Trial Before Pilate	18:28; 19:16
The Crucifixion	19:17-37
The Burial	19:38-42
The Resurrection	20:1-29
VIII. Epilogue	21:1-25
The Responsibilities of Belief	

The structure of the Gospel of John is so plain that its reader can hardly miss it. From beginning to end, the theme of belief is followed consistently. The inspired writer has selected certain episodes and teachings which represent the character and progress of the revelation of God in Christ (1:19), and has arranged them in such a way as to sweep his reader along in the tide of spiritual movement toward an active confessional faith in Christ.

The Prologue (1:1-18), begins by using the term, *word*, to introduce the Person of Christ. This term differs from those used in the other Gospels, for it does not connote any particular religious background. *Christ* is Jewish; *Lord* is Gentile; *Jesus* is human; but, *Word or Logos* is philosophical. John, thus, makes the subject of his Gospel, a universal figure, the incarnation of the Reason, who is God, who came from God, and who reveals God as a son reveals, a father. He is to be apprehended by those who receive Him (1:12), and the conflict between those who receive Him and those who do not, is likened to the conflict between light and darkness.

The Period of Consideration (1:19; 4:54), presents the Word made flesh as He appeared to His contemporaries and as He was received by them. For He is proclaimed in the witness of His forerunner, John, and in His dealing with John's disciples. His essential mission, "the Lamb of God" (1:29), and His method of appealing to the needs and desires of His would-be followers, connects Him with preceding history and revelation. He utilized, both the preaching of John and the prophetic Scriptures of the Old Testament, to establish His position. In the works, which He performed, He demonstrated His inherent power over things, over men, and over institutions (2:1-22). The interviews that followed were fuller manifestations of His sufficiency for all men. The learned and gentlemanly, Jewish teacher, Nicodemus, the sharp-tongued, and cynical Samaritan woman, and the importunate nobleman of Galilee, probably a Gentile, were all directed to faith in Jesus by different arguments and by different methods.

From Jesus' public presentation of Himself, arose controversy, for when He appealed to men to believe in Him, many refused. He did not ask for a blind or unreasoning faith, but He took care always, to appeal to facts, and to define the issues at stake, in belief and in unbelief.

The healing of the man at the pool, precipitated the Period of Controversy (5:1; 6:71), because the miracle was performed on the Sabbath. Jesus indicated that His action was a sample of what His Father was continually doing, and thus, tacitly claimed deity as His prerogative. In the discussion that followed (5:19-47), He argued for belief in Himself, on the basis of five witnesses: Himself, the forerunner, the Father, the works, which He had performed, and the Scripture. The miracles of Chapter 6, according to John, were directed chiefly to His disciples, in order to evoke from them, a committal to faith. These miracles and the discourses that followed are bound closely together, for the discourse is only the amplification of the truth enacted in the miracles. The appeal for belief is very strong in this section, as if Jesus were desirous of having the disciples commit themselves to Him, before the heat of controversy might alienate them, from Him.

The Period of Conflict (7:1; 11:53), carries the trends of the Period of Controversy to their logical crisis. The growing, though hesitant faith of the disciples, is contrasted with the stark cynicism of Jesus' brethren, with the wavering allegiance of the bewildered multitude, and with the venomous opposition of the Jewish hierarchy. Jesus' own evaluation of the conflict, appears in the history of the blind man, where He expressed the necessity of doing the works of God, while He still had the opportunity, and also in the raising of Lazarus, which He regarded as a supreme test of faith, and as the climactic proof of His power. The discourse material, which is included between these two miracles in the tenth chapter, is Jesus' last extended public statement of His mission. It declares the purpose of His death as clearly as did His utterance to the disciples at Caesarea Philippi, which is recorded in the Synoptics. The outcome of the conflict is predicted in His words, "I lay down my life, that I may take it again" (10:17).

In the Period of Crisis (11:54; 12:36), appear the various tensions which the conflict has created. Jesus retired from Jerusalem and its environs to Ephraim in order that He might be out of the storm center. The feeding of His friends was openly declared by the family of Bethany, who gave a dinner in His honor (12:1-2). The pilgrim multitude, who was present in Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover, hailed Him enthusiastically (12:20-21). Jesus Himself realized that the die was cast and removed Himself from public contacts (12:36).

Divine destiny, not popular vote, was the deciding factor in His life.

Up to this point, Jesus' ministry was public; from here on, it was private. The Period of Conference (12:36, 17:26), comprises the final instruction to the disciples after the Last Supper and also, His prayer to the Father. The preparation of the disciples for the shock of the cross and the report to the Father that He had finished His work, concluded the earthly ministry of Jesus.

The Period of Consummation (18:1; 20:31), brings the fulfillment of the two clashing principles of belief and of unbelief. In the betrayal and crucifixion, unbelief was unmasked. The weakness of Peter, the treachery of Judas, the jealous malice of the priests, and the cowardice of Pilate, show how unbelief reaches its ultimate end. On the other hand, the constancy of the beloved disciple, the women, and the generous action of Joseph and of Nicodemus, show how even an imperfect and uninstructed faith, can maintain loyalty in spite of bewilderment and danger. The resurrection, of course, was the final justification of belief, as well as the final vindication, of the revelation through Jesus, the Son of God.

### ***EMPHASIS***

The Gospel of John has many special features which strengthen the presentation of its main theme. The claims of Jesus are set forth in seven major, I AM's:

- |                                     |           |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. The bread of life                | 6:35      |
| 2. The light of the world           | 8:12, 9:5 |
| 3. The door (of the sheepfold)      | 10:7      |
| 4. The good shepherd                | 10:11,14  |
| 5. The resurrection and the life    | 11:25     |
| 6. The way, the truth, and the life | 14:6      |
| 7. The true vine                    | 15:1      |

The personal relation of Jesus to man is stressed in John. Twenty-seven interviews are

noted, some of which, are extensive, and some of which, are very brief. Included in the list are passages which can be classified under other headings, such as the miracle of the nobleman's son (4:46-54), or the trial before Pilate (18:28; 19:16). On occasions like these, the interest of Jesus in the individual, is prominent rather than the action itself. In the Synoptics, for example, the trial before Pilate, is an important feature of the denouncement of Jesus' life, while in the Gospel of John, Jesus' personal interest in Pilate, and His effort to bring Pilate to a recognition of His claims, are much more plain.

The Johannine vocabulary is so unusual, that only a verse or two from this Gospel, quoted apart from its context, is easily recognizable. Certain key words are repeated constantly, not because the writer is limited in scope of thought, but because the central truths of the Gospel, like diamonds, need to be viewed from the angle of each facet. Some of these terms, like "life," "light," "darkness," "work," "world," "believe," "flesh," "hour," are either figurative, or else, have a special technical meaning in this Gospel. Others are abstract and somewhat philosophical in content: "truth," "true," "hate," "receive," "love," "take away," "send," "know," "glory," "witness," "abide," "the Father."

John's Gospel shows, by its vocabulary, that teaching on the Christian life, had already crystallized into certain definite concepts, which were expressed in fixed phraseology, and which then, as today, represented a whole new pattern of spiritual truth.

The Gospel of John, emphasizes the deity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Although, no Gospel portrays, more clearly, His humanity, there is no other, that asserts so directly, the prerogative of deity: "The Word was God" (1:1); "I and *my* Father are one" (10:30); "Before Abraham was, I am" (8:58); "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (14:9); and Thomas' confession, "My Lord and my God" (20:28).

The humanity of Jesus is also emphasized. He was weary (4:6), thirsty (4:7), impatient (6:26), wistful (6:67), severe (8:44), sorrowful (11:35), appreciative (12:7), troubled (12:27), loving (13:1), loyal (18:8), courageous (18:23). To His contemporaries, who met Him casually, He was, "the man that is called Jesus" (9:11); to those who lived with Him, He became, "the Holy One of God" (6:69).

## ***PURPOSE***

As already stated, the purpose of this Gospel is apologetic. All of the Gospels were designed to inculcate belief in those who read them or who heard them read. This Gospel was planned for those who had already, some philosophical predilections, as the Prologue shows, and who were looking for an answer to Philip's demand: "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us" (14:8).

It is possible that John's Gospel was written as a conscious attempt to supplement the current accounts of the life and work of Jesus, which had found written expression in the canonical Synoptic Gospels. One cannot state dogmatically, that John knew and read Matthew, Mark, or Luke. Nevertheless, the general omission of Jesus' Galilean ministry, the almost total absence of the parables, the definite reference to selectivity in the miracles (20:30), and the dovetailing of some of John's historical data with that in the Synoptics, makes one feel that the author was trying, to give to the public, fresh information that had not previously been used in writing. For instance, in the account of the Last Supper, John described the foot-washing scene and explained how Jesus wished to provide an object lesson in humility for the disciples. Apart from the assumption that such a lesson might be salutary for general application, he assigned no definite reason for it. Luke, however, told how the disciples were arguing among themselves, "which of them was accounted to be greatest" (Luke 22:24). The two accounts, thus, interlock in meaning, and one may speculate, whether John was not explaining how Jesus met the situation, which Luke described as a personal addition to the Lukan account.

## ***CHARACTERS***

One peculiarity of John's Gospel is its development of character in sketches separated by intervals of text. Nicodemus (John 3:1-15, 7:50-52, 19:39), Philip (1:43-46, 6:5-7, 14:8-11), Thomas (11:16, 14:5-5, 20:24-29), Mary and Martha (11:1-40, 12:2-8), Mary, the mother of Jesus (2:1-5, 19:26-27), and others, are mentioned naturally and easily, as they are recalled in connection with the main narrative, and yet, when the separate allusions to

them are combined, they make a complete snapshot portrait of the person concerned. To some extent, this procedure is true in the other Gospels, but it is largely confined to a few prominent characters, such as Peter or Judas, whereas, the Fourth Gospel uses both prominent and obscure characters as examples of belief and of unbelief.

