

Gospels/Acts Immerse Intensive

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September 2016



Papyrus 52 John's
Gospel 100-125 A.D.

Sessions One and Two: General Principles and The Relationship between the Synoptics and John

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General Principles

Mark, Matthew, Luke-Acts, John

- Composed 60-85 A.D.
- Who wrote them?
- Why at this time?
- Primarily Jewish documents
- Mark 1:1-3 -- discussion

Layers

- Jesus' actions and teachings (27-30 A.D.)
- Church's use of these materials (30 – 60 A.D.)
- Composition of the Gospels (begins c. 60 A.D.) for new audiences
- Our English translations (2013 A.D.)



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General Principles (articles in New Bible Dictionary – LOGOS)

Literary Form(s) of and in Gospels/Acts

- Ancient *Bios* (life) – a contemporary model – some biography, some history, some moralizing/evaluation
- “Gospel” – *euaggelion* – a literary composition that combines elements of **history, biography and theology** in order to communicate the significance of Jesus of Nazareth.
- Relationship between “Gospel” and “gospel.”
- Small literary forms within Gospels – parables, controversy stories, proverbs, miracle stories, prophecy, discourse

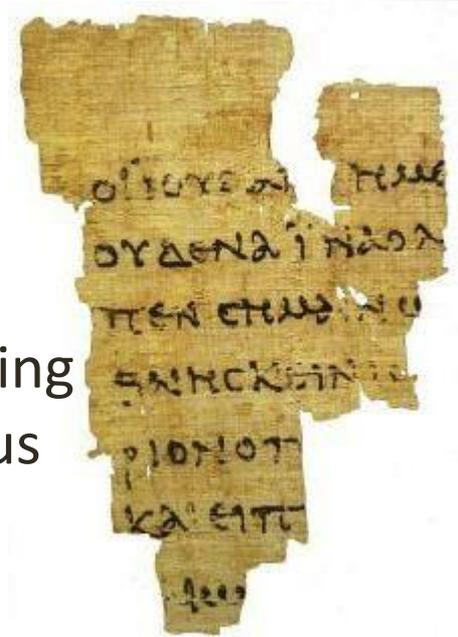


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General Principles

Function of a “Gospel” – how it is intended to work

- Gospel as narrative – it tells a story by using many different stories – biographical focus on words and deeds
- Story elements – plot, characterization, setting, flashback, editorial comments
- Gospel as history – the story it tells has authenticity – related to eye-witness accounts (Luke 1:1-4); Acts 10:34-43; follows norms of first century history writing – speeches, narration of actions
- Gospel as theology – discerning the significance of the main character and his actions. Setting in context of OT (Mk. 1:1-3)



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General Principles

Function of a “Gospel” – how it is intended to work and what it is intended to evoke.

- Relationship of author to the intended audience.
- Who is the intended audience?
- What response did the writer expect from his audience?
- How did the writer compose a Gospel to elicit this response from his audience?
- John 20:30-31
- Mark 1:1



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Working Together

- In groups of three, read together Mark 8:11-20.
- Discern and describe the plot of this section of Mark
[Plot is the development of action through conflict and resolution of conflict as well as interaction of the characters.]
- Who is the main character and how he is described directly and through his interactions and discourse? What is the main feature of this character that the writer is emphasizing in this narrative segment? What is the evidence for this?
- What additional characters/groups are involved and how do they relate to Jesus and/or to one another?
- What is the key issue that the author addresses in this narrative segment?
- Why do you think the writer included these stories in his narrative?

General Principles

Purpose of a Gospel

- Jesus is the main character in every Gospel
- Jesus as mystery
- Mark 1:1 – Jesus, Messiah, Son of God
- Matthew 28:19-20 – Jesus with authority, God with us, Jesus' mission
- Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:7-8 – the “promise”
- John 1:14-18; 20:30-31

Gospel writers as theologians

Gospel writers as eye-witnesses

Gospel text as trustworthy – accessing materials from the first century A.D.?

Gospel text as translation – cross-cultural challenges and realities.



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Synoptics and John's Gospel -- Challenges

1. Synoptic Relations

- Relationships between Mark, Matthew and Luke
- Similarities and Differences
 - 90% of Mark's material included in Matthew's Gospel
 - Luke follows Mark's order and inserts new sections, e.g. Infancy material, Journey to Jerusalem
 - Matthew and Luke share similar material --- Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) and Sermon on the Plain (Luke 11-12)
 - Unique materials in all three Gospels

Evaluation of a test case – the feeding of the 5,000 – Mathew, Mark, Luke and John.



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Working Together

- In groups of 4 read together the synoptic account of the feeding of the 5,000.
- Note where the accounts are similar and where they are different.
- Discuss two differences and try to discern:
 - Does the difference change the story in any significant way?
 - Given the larger purpose that the writer has for his narrative, can you discern why the writer would include these changes.
 - Any other insights that might explain the variation?

Synoptics and John's Gospel -- Challenges

1. Synoptic Relations

- Question of origins
- Information in the Gospels: Links to eyewitnesses – authors, others, Luke 1:1-4; the “we – source” in Acts 16ff; the “beloved disciple” in John 21:20-24.
- Information in church tradition – Muratorian Canon. Mark and Peter in church tradition. (Metzger, *Canon of the New Testament* (187), 191-201, 305-7.)
- The Presbyter Papias as quoted in Eusebius.



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Synoptics and John's Gospel -- Challenges



1. Synoptic Relations:

Papias as quoted in Eusebius:

“but now, to the extracts already made, we shall add, as being a matter of primary importance, a tradition regarding Mark who wrote the Gospel, which he [Papias] has given in the following words]: And the presbyter said this. **Mark having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately whatsoever he remembered. It was not, however, in exact order that he related the sayings or deeds of Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor accompanied Him. But afterwards, as I said, he accompanied Peter, who accommodated his instructions to the necessities [of his hearers], but with no intention of giving a regular narrative of the Lord's sayings. Wherefore Mark made no mistake in thus writing some things as he remembered them. For of one thing he took special care, not to omit anything he had heard, and not to put anything fictitious into the statements. [This is what is related by Papias regarding Mark; but with regard to Matthew he has made the following statements]: **Matthew put together the oracles [of the Lord] in the Hebrew language, and each one interpreted them as best he could.”****

Synoptics and John's Gospel -- Challenges

1. Synoptic Relations

- Earliest textual fragments
- John's Gospel – c. 125 AD
- Matthew's Gospel – c. 165 AD
- Mark's Gospel – perhaps first century?
- Luke's Gospel – late second century

2. John and the Synoptics

- How to explain the similarities and differences?
- Only one miracle common (feeding of the 5,000), apart from the resurrection of Jesus.
- No parables in John's Gospel.
- No account of the Inauguration of Communion.
- No account of the Transfiguration.
- Different purpose requires different contents.
- John seems to assume the content of the Synoptics



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Synoptics and John's Gospel -- Challenges

3. John's Special Place

- Different place and time – mid-80's
- A capstone reflection upon the significance of Jesus, with particular emphasis upon his deity and his humanity as two realities that cannot be diminished.
- The importance of the prologue (John 1:1-18) and the epilogue (John 21:20ff).
- Jesus is the “expression of God,” a continual theophany who brings God’s presence directly into our historical context. The importance of the theme of “glory.”
- The nature of the mission and people that Jesus was creating through his work (John 13-17).



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Synoptics and John's Gospel -- Challenges

4. Credibility of the Contents and Presentations presented by the Four Gospels.

- A continuing issue of apologetics that cannot be ignored. Did Jesus really say and do these things?
- The question of the “historical Jesus.”
- Prophet, apocalypticist, wise teacher/Jewish moralist, Messianic figure, heretic, Jewish revolutionary – how was he perceived? How do the Gospels present him?
- Controversial within Judaism – new vision of the Messiah’s role, new understanding of the Jewish Scriptures, new perspective on the role and identity of the people of God, new perspective on the land.
- Controversial in the Roman Empire – challenge to the emperor.
- The dilemma/irony/blasphemy of a crucified messiah within Judaism and Greek philosophy (1 Corinthians 1:23; Acts 28:23-31; Romans 1:1-7).
- Evidence for the Resurrection – the primary datum



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Working Together

- In groups of 3 read together Mark 9:2-8 – The Transfiguration.
- Scenario:
- You have just preached a sermon on this story in Mark's Gospel. As people leave the church, a young adult approaches you. She seems to be somewhat agitated, wanting to ask you a question. After a few moments she starts a conversation with you and as things proceed she asks the following question:

In your sermon you assume that this story about Jesus is true and that this really happened one day on some mountain in Galilee. But my question is this: what evidence do you have that this Gospel writer is using historical data? What evidence do you have that he had access to one of the eye-witnesses (Peter, James or John)? Even if they witnessed something, how can you be sure that they interpreted this event correctly?

- Develop a response to this series of questions.