

The Gospels

Class 2 of NT Survey

Introduction

- I will send you my notes afterwards if you just want to listen.
- The problem is we don't know how to interpret certain aspects of the Gospels.
- The solution is learning the genre, authorship, audience, date, exigency, and main message.

The Four Animals with the Four Gospels

- Scripture
 - Ezek 1:10 "Their faces looked like this: Each of the four had the face of a man, and on the right side each had the face of a lion, and on the left the face of an ox; each also had the face of an eagle."
 - Rev 4:7 "The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle."
- Irenaeus of Lyons (east-central France),
 - Irenaeus heard the preaching of Polycarp, who was a disciple of John the Apostle
 - Around AD 180 (lived AD 130–202) wrote *Against Heresies*, Book Three, 11:8 (11, "Proofs in Continuation, Extracted from St. John's Gospel. The Gospels are Four in Number, Neither More Nor Less. Mystic Reasons for This."):
 8. It is not possible that the Gospels can be either more or fewer in number than they are. For, since there are four zones of the world in which we live, and four principal winds, while the Church is scattered throughout all the world, and the "pillar and ground" of the Church is the Gospel and the spirit of life; it is fitting that she should have four pillars, breathing out immortality on every side, and vivifying men afresh. From which fact, it is evident that the Word, the Artificer of all, He that sitteth upon the cherubim, and contains all things, He who was manifested to men, has given us the Gospel under four aspects, but bound together by one Spirit.
- Symbols of the four gospels: Augustine in *The Harmony of the Gospels*, Book One, 6:9 writes: "Those three living creatures – lion, man, and calf – have their course upon this earth. Likewise, those three Evangelists chiefly describe the things which Christ did in the flesh, and report the precepts which He delivered to men who bear the burden of the flesh, in order to instruct them in the rightful exercise of this mortal life. John, on the other hand, soars like an eagle above the clouds of human weakness, and gazes upon the light of permanent truth with those keenest and steadiest eyes of the heart."
- Jerome
 - Jerome of Stridon or Saint Jerome (AD 342–420): From him on, artists and others basically went with his identifications.

- In the preface to his Commentary on Matthew, Jerome wrote as follows:

“The book of Ezekiel demonstrates that these four Gospels had been predicted much earlier. Its first vision has the following description: ‘And in the midst there was a likeness of four animals. Their countenances were the face of a man and the face of a lion and the face of a calf and the face of an eagle.’ The first face of a man represents Matthew, who began his narrative as though about a man: ‘The book of the generation of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham.’ The second, Mark, in whom the voice of a lion roaring in the wilderness is heard: ‘A voice of one shouting in the desert: Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight.’ The third, of the calf, which prefigures that the evangelist Luke began with Zacharias the priest. The fourth, John the evangelist, who, having taken up eagle’s wings and hastening toward higher matters, discusses the Word of God.” [This rendering was based on pages 55-56 of Thomas P. Scheck’s Saint Jerome: Commentary on Matthew, Copyright © 2008 The Catholic University of America Press.]

The Criticisms:

“Biblical Criticism”

- Fred Long: “The modern study of the biblical materials using rational methods and procedures.”
- A. Lower Criticism (Textual Criticism): Establishes the Text as close to the originals as possible.
- B. Higher Criticism: Study of Scriptures to discern their dating, author, sources, audiences, and composition.
- C. “Historical Criticism”: *Studying the gospels to recover their history—even the history behind them.*

Historical Criticism

- First quest: Ending with William Wrede and Albert Schweitzer at the beginning of the 20th century.
 - Schweitzer surveyed the 200 or so books of the lives of Christ (that were all a part of the first quest for the historical Jesus).
 - Wright said in JVG that there are two roads to go down: Wrede’s (“vreda”) or Schweitzer
 - Wrede had an ahistorical spiritualized Jesus. All supernatural in the gospels is a “literary constructs”.
 - People didn’t want the apocalyptic, confused Jesus of Schweitzer
 - *Wright says that we need to follow after Schweitzer even though he was mostly mistaken. We need to follow the historicity of Jesus.
- Second quest: 1970s, John Dominic Crossan, and The Jesus Seminar
- Third quest: late 1980s through the present
- Where are we now? Postmodernism.
 - Ideological criticisms
 1. Deconstruction
 2. Reader-Response Criticism
 3. Liberation Hermeneutics

4. Feminist Criticism
 5. Post-Colonial Criticism
 6. Imperial Criticism
- Reader Response Criticism
 - When modernized, this takes on the persona of the audience.
 - Additionally, it has moved to ideological realms (liberation, feminism).
 - This is where we are right now.

Matthew (+ Sociological Criticism)

- MAN; Lion says Augustine; Irenaeus says MAN; Epiphanius of Salamis (AD 315–405) says Man; Jerome agrees with Epiphanius
 - “Son of Man” 30x in Matthew (“Son of God” just 8x)
 - Jesus the King = Abraham
 - Genealogy at the beginning to bring out the humanly lineage.
- Genre: Bios
- Date: AD 60s (Eusebius comments that Matthew wrote his Gospel while Peter and Paul were in Rome).
- Author: Matthew (Matt. 9:9): previously called Levi (Mark 2:14); formerly a tax-collector (Matt. 10:13).
- Audience: Jewish converts to Christianity likely living in Syrian Antioch or in Palestine after dispersion from Stephen's martyrdom (Acts 11:19–26).
- Exigency: Unknown
- Main Point: Jesus is the authoritative king of a God's truly righteous nation of disciples.
 - Authoritative king
 - Matthew 1 Genealogy: Descendent of David
 - Matthew 5–9: With a word, he was powerful
 - Matthew 25: Sheep and goats
 - Of God's truly righteous nation (Five Great Teaching Discourses)
 - Matthew 5–7: Teaching on Righteousness
 - Matthew 10: Mission outreach
 - Matthew 13: Parables
 - Matthew 18: Mission inreach
 - Matthew 23–25: Confrontation and Justice
 - On purpose? Each of these speeches ends with “And it happened, when Jesus had finished saying these things, that... (7:28–29; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1).
 - Of disciples: Matthew 28
- Structural turning points:
 - Matt 4:17 *From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”*

- Matt 16:21 *From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.*
- Son of Man sayings in Matthew
 - Matt 8:20 Jesus replied, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”
 - Matt 9:6 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. . . .” Then he said to the paralytic, “Get up, take your mat and go home.”
 - Matt 11:19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and “sinners.”’ But wisdom is proved right by her actions.”
 - Matt 12:8 For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”
 - Matt 26:64 “Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”
- Matthew: Social Science Criticism
 - *Social Science criticism is applying social-science insights to New Testament texts.*
 - Example: Patron-Client vs. Boss-Employee
 - Collectivism vs. Individualism.

Mark (+ Text and Form criticism)

- LION; Man says Augustine; Irenaeus says Eagle; Epiphanius of Salamis (AD 315–405) says Lion; Jerome agrees with Epiphanius
 - ~ “*Son of God*” (3x); “*Son of Man*” (8x)
 - Lions are associated with kings and power
 - Power book
- Genre: Bios
- Date: AD 40s–60s
- Author: John Mark: cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10); companion of Peter (1 Pet. 5:13); companion of Paul (Acts 12:25); Papias (ca AD 120) via Eusebius says he wrote gospel using Peter.
- Audience: Gentile Christians, possibly those living in Rome (Mark 3:17; 5:41; 7:34; 12:42; 14:36; 15:16; 15:34). Why? He explains phrases by translating them for Gentiles:
 - *Boanerges* means Sons of Thunder (Mark 3:17)
 - *Talitha Kum* means “little girl, get up” (Mark 5:41)
 - *Ephphatha* means “Be opened” (Mark 7:34)
 - *Abba* means Father (Mark 14:36)
 - *Eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani* which translated means... (Mark 15:34)
- Exigency: Unknown

- Main Point: Jesus is the political king, coming as a suffering Messiah, to redeem the people of God.
 - Jesus the Servant = No genealogy
 - Mark 10:(41-)45: Jesus fails to be political (as they saw it) and becomes the suffering messiah.
 - Jesus predicts his death three times, but disciples don't understand (8:27-38; 9:30-37; 10:32-45). E.g., Mark 8:31-33: He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. 32 He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."
- Mark: Text Criticism
 - *Text criticism is analyzing the New Testament documents, especially the Gospels, by looking at the manuscript evidence.*
 - Bruce Metzger is the most well-known text critic. He and his committee created a rating system:
 - A. Certain
 - B. Almost certain
 - C. Difficult to tell
 - D. Very difficult to tell
 - Example: These only come out by prayer [and fasting] (Mark 9:29). It's an "A" that it's just "prayer" because of manuscript evidence.
- ~Mark: Form Criticism
 - *Form Criticism is the study of oral tradition and literary forms to understand the meaning of the pericopes.*
 - Rudolf Bultmann: We can't get to the historical Jesus but we have the teachings of Jesus (the *kerygma*).
 - Types of forms in the Gospels:
 - Pronouncement stories
 - Parable
 - Miracle
 - Wise Sayings
 - His assumptions were:
 - Rigid forms
 - God can't act miraculously
 - The church had ulterior motives
 - His outline of the form:
 - Introduction (setting) Mark 2:1-3
 - Need Mark 2:4

- Healing Mark 2:11-12a
- Response Mark 2:12b
- So Bultmann says that the stuff in 2:5-10 doesn't fit the form; therefore, it was added by the church to build her up and it's not historically accurate.
- Well, Bultmann's students said, "If there's no history, there's nothing." Then they went on and started redaction criticism.

Luke (+ Redaction criticism)

- CALF (Augustine) (Irenaeus says Calf); in Greek and Hebrew, it's a young Ox ready for slaughter (as in the golden calf in Psalm 106:20 and the fattened calf" in Luke 15); Jerome and Epiphanius agree calf
 - Narrative begins with Zacharias the priest. Luke 1:5-7: "In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. 6 Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. 7 But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years."
 - The performance of proper ceremonies on baby Jesus: Luke 2:21-24: "On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived. 22 When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"), 24 and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons.""
 - Luke 15: Fattened calf in prodigal son story
 - Luke begins (Luke 1) and ends with the temple: Luke 24:50-53 When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. 51 While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. 52 Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. 53 And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.
 - Luke 9:51 As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.
 - Luke switches the order of Matthew's temptation chronology—to put the temple at the end, to show that Jesus is going to the temple.
 - Right before he died, it says, "And the curtain of the temple was torn in two" (Luke 23:45).
- Jesus, Son of Man = Adam
- Genre: Bios
- Date: AD 55-62 (Acts was written just after AD 62; 2 Timothy and Clement write about Paul being set free and on trial again after the two-year Acts 28 stint).
- Author: Luke: doctor (Col. 4:14); coworker of Paul (Philem. 24; 2 Tim. 4:11); travel companion of Paul (Acts 16:11; 20:5-8; 13-15; 21:1)

- Audience: Theophilus (Luke 1:1–4)—a Hellenistic Jewish convert or a literary construct?; also written with a Roman audience (or Caesarean audience) in mind because "most excellent" was used only of Roman officials in Luke/Acts (e.g. Acts 24:3 and 26:25)
- Exigency: Unknown
- Main Point: Jesus brings Israel's history to climax and fulfillment of the Scriptures—gearing up for volume 2, where they move from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.
- Luke: Redaction criticism
 - Redaction criticism is the study of the synoptics and how they borrowed from one another.
 - The shaping of the *kerygma* in the hands of the evangelists.
 - You can understand how Matthew and Luke redacted Mark/Q, etc. by doing Parallels.
 - People began to doubt redaction criticism because some of their presuppositions and conclusions are speculative.

John (+ Literary criticism)

- EAGLE (Augustine); Irenaeus says Lion; Jerome and Epiphanius agree Eagle. This is the gift of the Spirit hovering over the church is emphasized throughout.
 - The spirit descends on him like a dove (John 1)
 - The spirit is like the wind and comes from above (John 3)
 - The father seeks worshipers in spirit and in truth (John 4)
 - John 14–16
 - John 20:21–22: John 20:21–22 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." 22 And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.
- Theological Bios
- Date: AD 90s (P52 Fragment of John is dated AD 95–125)
- Author: The one whom Jesus loved (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20); Lazarus? (John 11:3, 5, 36); told to take care of Mary, mother of Jesus (John 19:26); a rival with Peter (John 21:20–24).
 - John 11:3 So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick."
 - John 11:5 Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.
 - John 11:36 Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"
 - Gary M. Burge, "Who Wrote the Gospel of John?"
<https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/who-wrote-the-gospel-of-john>
- Audience: Palestinian or Asiatic Jewish converts to Christianity (translations into Aramaic).
- Exigency: Unknown
- ~John: *Literary Criticism*
 1. Discourse Analysis
 2. Narrative Criticism

3. Intertextuality Criticism
 4. Socio-Rhetorical / Rhetorical Criticism
- John: Narrative Criticism
 - (Narrative Criticism is studying individual documents to find features of the story that help you understand the meaning (development, structure, themes, climax, etc.).*
 - Redaction criticism gave way to narrative criticism.
 - We need to look deeply into the narrative of the text. The Asbury class IBS is champion of this criticism. David Bauer has studied this.
 - This goes away from liberal historical analysis and into a focus on the text itself.
 - Structure:
 - 7 “I am” statements.
 - 7 (or 8) Signs: eight with resurrection:
 - 2:11 Water to wine
 - 4:46-54: Healed Son
 - 5:1-15: Paralytic healed
 - 6:1-15: Loves multiplied
 - 6:16-21: Walking on water
 - 9: Curing blind man
 - 11: Raising Lazarus
 - 2:18-22 he says it OR 20: 8th sign: Resurrection (OR Miracle of 153 fish)
 - Main Point: Through faith in Jesus, the incarnate Word, you can have life. John 3:16; John 10:10; and John 20:30 “Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”
 - Theme is *life*.
 - John 1:4: In him was life
 - John 3:16: Everyone who believes will have life
 - John 4:10: “Living water”
 - John 5:21 Father raises daed and gives them life
 - John 6:27: Work for food that endures to eternal life “Living bread”
 - John 6:63: “You have the words of life”
 - John 7:38: Living water flows from within those who believe
 - John 10:25: “I am the resurrection and the life”
 - John 17:3: “This is everlasting life: that they may know you the one true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”