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Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος,
καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς
τὸν Θεόν, καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.
οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν Θεόν. πάντα
δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ
ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἕν.
ὃ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν,
καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ
φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώ
πων· καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ
σκοτίᾳ φαίνει, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ
οὐ κατέλαβεν.
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West Bengal, India

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πων· καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ
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οὐ κατέλαβεν.

Jesus in The Synoptic Gospels

H. JOSEPH LALFAKMAWIA

BCS Study Material: NT

For private circulation only

JESUS IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS



H. JOSEPH LALFAKMAWIA

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IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

H. Joseph Lalfakmawia

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FOREWORD

For many years theological education has been done within the well-protected campus with the primary objective of training pastors. Theological Education by Extension (TEE) is an attempt to do theology beyond campus. The vision of TEE is not confined to ministerial training programme of the churches alone; rather it involves equipping the whole people of God; it is for the *Laos* – the whole people of God. It seeks to empower the whole people of God for formation and transformation of the whole community and search to build a just and inclusive community in the context of the people of other faiths and to all people. Thus, the theological education extension programme is meant to strengthen building an inclusive community. Those who go through the process of such education will be able to work not only "for" the people, but also "together with the people".

To aid external candidates in their studies, the production of BCS study materials was under consideration for a long time. We are happy that the resource materials are ready and I am sure this will greatly benefit the BCS candidates especially those who do not have access to library facility. We record our appreciation to Rev. H. Joseph Lalfakmawia for preparing, *Jesus in the Synoptic Gospel.* We thank EMW, Germany, for journeying with us in strengthening theological education and making the resources available for the production of study materials.

Wati Longchar
Dean
Kolkata
April, 2013

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CHAPTER 1

General Outline of the New Testament

There are twenty seven books in the New Testament. Their forms and styles are differed from each other. They can be generally classified into the following forms (genre):

Gospels

The word 'Gospel' is taken from the Anglo-Saxon word 'godspell,' which means 'good news.' However, the root word comes from the Greek word, euangelion (euvaggelion) that also means 'good news.'

The term 'gospel' is interpreted in three stages:

1) The good news preached by Jesus,
2) The good news preached about Jesus.'
3) It can also mean the books that contain the memories of Jesus, the four books of gospels we find in our new testament.

In the New Testament times, the word *evangelion* did not refer to a book or writings but to a proclamation or message. It came to be used to denote the Christian writings only since 2nd century CE. At the end of the 2nd century CE, it was used to mean the canonical gospels.[1]

Gospels are not biographies. They are accounts of the life and teaching of Jesus. There are four gospels in the New Testament: the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

The first three (Matthew, Mark and Luke) are called **Synoptic Gospels**, because they follow a common synopsis or outline. These Gospels can be studied together in parallel because they follow the same basic outline, use many of the same words and the same order.

The Gospel According to John, also called the Fourth Gospel, is entirely different from the other three. It does not follow the same outline, and his presentation is also different from them.

Majority of the scholars regarded mark as the oldest of the Gospels. It is assumed that the four gospels were written between 65-100 CE.

The Book of Acts

The Acts of the Apostles is considered as the second volume of Luke's work. It tells us the story of the beginning and the early life the church. It also says the spread of the church from Jerusalem all over Palestine and then to the gentiles. It can be classified as historical book of the New Testament.

Pauline Letters

There are thirteen Pauline letters in the New Testament. Paul's letters are the oldest Christian documents we have. The first of them was written within 25 years of Jesus' death, and the last of them may have been written before any of the gospels. They are arranged in the New Testament, in order of length, and the letters to individuals last. Those thirteen letters of Paul are: the Letters to the Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon.

1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are called Pastoral Letters because they are concerned about the care, beginnings of organizational life and administration of the church.

The Letter to the Hebrews

This is one of the best works in the New Testament with a high quality Greek and a careful sentence construction. It affirms the superiority of Christ over all that has gone before in Israel.

The early church, by the end of the 2nd century CE, considered Paul as the writer of this letter. But now, most of the scholars give up this thinking. It is, therefore, good to regard the writer as anonymous because there is no claim within the letter about the writer. It is assumed that the letter was written in 60s or 80s CE.

Catholic Letters

The Letters of James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2 and 3 John and Jude are collectively called Catholic Letters. They are called the catholic letters because they are addressed to the church universally. They are named after the authors. I John was the first to receive the designation, "Catholic Epistle," because of the indefiniteness and the broadness of its address, and then this designation flowed to the entire group of epistles. The term "catholic" meant to the earliest Greek ecclesiastiCal writers not "recognized

in the catholic church," but rather the term "catholic" meant to them "intended for the catholic church."[2] All of them were written most probably between 60-100 CE.

Apocalypse

The Book of Revelation is called a New Testament apocalypse because it is a revelatory literature with vivid symbols, mysterious numbers etc. It was written in Asia Minor towards the end of Roman Emperor Domitian's reign, 8195 CE. Its purpose was to encourage the Christian churches which were under persecution by Domitian, and to assure them of Christ's victory over the powers of the antichrist.

The writer was known as John. He was banished and imprisoned in an island of Patmos, the coast of Asia Minor. He suffered persecution because he preached the gospel. He saw a vision of Jesus and then wrote it for the Christians who were also under persecution.

Endnotes

1 Introductory note, NRSV, Catholic Version

2 Werner Georg Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1965), 283.

CHAPTER 2

How the Gospels Came to be Written

Christian writings did not exist from the beginning. Though we will deal with the date and authorship of the Gospels, we will introduce here that the Gospels were not written immediately after the death of Jesus. There was at least thirty-year gap between the death of Jesus (around 30 CE) and the first Gospel (probably Mark).

Factors for Late Writings of the Gospels

A question about 'why were the first Christians somewhat slow in writing their own books?' might be asked. Some of the reasons can be given as follows:

1) No Instruction to Write

A major retarding factor was that, unlike Moses who by tradition authored the Pentateuch, Jesus did not produce a writing that contained his revelation. We do not have any information from the Bible that Jesus instructed his disciples to He is ever recorded as setting down even a word in his lifetime or telling any of his disciples to write. Accordingly, the proclamation of the kingdom of God made present in Jesus did not depend of writing.

2) Imminent Parousia[1]

In its simplest sense, it means 'expectation of Jesus' immediate or instantaneous second coming'. The first Christian generations were strongly eschatological. For them, the 'last times' were at hand, and undoubtedly Jesus would return soon (maranatha=1 Cor. 16:22 that means 'come Lord Jesus'). Jesus' saying, "Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom" (Mt. 16:28), "Truly I tell you, this generation will

not pass away until all things have taken place" (Lk. 21:32) and Jn. 21:21-23 (about John the Beloved) might be misunderstood to mean Jesus' immediate/instantaneous return (parousia).

Such anticipation of the end of the world did not encourage Christians to write for future generations (who would not be around to read books). Moreover, if Jesus, their Lord comes very soon, there was absolutely no need to write a book or biography about Jesus which they could tell by mouth because he would come back soon.

3) Oral Tradition was More Valued

Jesus' teaching and acts were preserved mainly in oral traditions; and the eyewitnesses to Jesus, the apostles' teachings in words were highly preferred. The oral apostolic possessed such weight that an authenticated and consecutive Gospel in a written form may not have been conceived.[2] In fact, in those days the oral tradition was always preferred and carried more authority than written documents. In the meantime, it does not mean that there were no written books. In fact, there were many books but oral tradition/ message by word or mouth was more valued than written record.

4) Eyewitness

So long as eyewitnesses remained alive to bear witness to what they had seen and heard, the need for a written record was not greatly felt. Moreover, as it has been said above, oral transmission by the eyewitness was more preferable and highly favored during those days.[3]

5) Mother Church

As long as the church in Jerusalem existed, there was a central authority that could be appealed to in matters of dispute.

With the destruction of Jerusalem and the loss in influence of the Jerusalem church, there resulted a leadership vacuum and a need for an authoritative control of the Gospel traditions, and it was this that led to the writing of our Gospels.

Factors for Writing the Gospels

A transition between the oral transmission and reduction of Jesus' accounts into a written form took about two or more decades. As the first Christians were rejected by their fellow Jews in their worship, they began to spread their faith even outside Jerusalem or Palestine. As the primitive Christians were increasing in number, and as the time passed by, they faced lot of difficulties and necessities which compelled them to produce

their own writings. Those factors for preserving the Christian teachings in a written form can be summarized as follows:

1) Delay of Parousia

As we have discussed above, the early Christians believed that Jesus would come again very soon. They thought that He would come during their lifetimes. So, they did not feel the need to write. However, as Jesus did not come immediately as they expected, they began to write for the sake of the new church and the spread of the Gospel.

2) Eyewitness Began to Die

As the eyewitnesses of Jesus and his ministry were getting old and began to die, first Christian generation came to an end. As a result, need was felt to preserve Jesus' teachings in a written form. Then the first Gospel writings began to appear and soon circulated among the churches. But this does not necessarily mean that the direct apostles of Jesus wrote down their testimonies. In those days, it was quite common that the authoritative person(s) narrated and the secretaries or scribes penned down. This happened on the Gospel according to Mark (which we will deal with it later).

3) To Meet the Need of the New Churches

As believers were increasing and churches were established outside Palestine, the new believers who had never come across Jesus or eyewitnesses were in need of resources. As a matter of fact, their knowledge about Jesus' teachings and ministry was quite meager. The evangelists were compelled to meet that ecclesiastical need of the knowledge of Jesus and his teaching especially for the churches outside Palestine. By 'evangelist' here, we mean the Gospel writers such as Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. We use this term purposefully because there is a serious question about who the actual authors of these Gospels are. Therefore, instead of landing ourselves into a foreseen trouble, we use the word 'evangelist'. In short, it means the 'Gospel writer(s).'

Nature of the Gospels

It is a fact that Pauline Letters were the first Christian literature of which we know. The so-called Gospels appeared after sometimes. According to common scholarly view, somewhere in the 60s or just after 70 the Gospels According to Mark was written, offering an account of Jesus' deeds and words. This Gospel is often claimed as the first of the four Gospels of the New Testament. Mark emphatically presented the suffering of Jesus rather than his words and ministry. This emphasis on suffering

and the cross may reflect persecution undergone by Christians addressed by Mark. Expansion or explication of the Jesus tradition was demanded because the hearers and readers were no longer the Palestinian Jews of Jesus' lifetime but Gentiles to whom Jewish customs and ideas were strange (cf. Mk. 7:3-4).

The Gospels According to Matthew and to Luke were probably written ten to twenty years after Mark. They offer much more of the Jesus tradition, especially by way of sayings. These two Gospels have many differences but more common features and similarities. Due to many similarities and commonness these three Gospels can be studied and compared together, and are called Synoptic Gospels. This will be dealt at length in the following chapters. Still another form of Jesus tradition is found in the Fourth Gospel (John). It was written around 90-100 CE. Its form of writing is so different that scholars have labored extensively.

None of the Gospels mentions an author's name, and it is quite possible that none was actually written by the one whose name was attached to it. Nevertheless, those names constitute a claim that Jesus was being interpreted in a way faithful to the first and second generation of apostolicwitnesses and preachers.

Endnotes

1 Robert H. Stein, *The Synoptic Problem: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, [1987], 1994), 163f.
2 Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 164. Papias (the bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia, who was born in 70 CE and died about 146 CE) states, "For I did not suppose that information from books would help me so much as the word of a living and surviving voice."
3 Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 164.

CHAPTER 3

General Background of the Gospels

MATTHEW

1) Authorship

The title 'According to Matthew' is affixed at least as early as 125 CE.[1] It was first claimed by Papias by ca. 125 CE. There is proposal that the original Matthew Gospel was written in either Hebrew or Aramaic that the canonical Matthew we have now is a translation into Greek from that Hebrew or Aramaic.[2] However, it is strongly suggested that this idea is not reliable. So, it is our opinion that the canonical Matthew (the Matthew as we have in our current Bible) was originally written in Greek by a non eyewitness whose name is unknown to us and who depended on sources like Mark and Q.[3] This short form, Q means 'Quell' in German, that means 'source.' We will clearly discuss about this in chapter 5.

There is a division among the scholars whether this unknown evangelist was a Jewish Christian or a gentile Christian. While many scholars believe in gentile authorship, majority of the scholars accepted that he was a Jewish Christian. His use of the OT indicates that he know Hebrew and perhaps even Aramaic. He often corrects Mark's style and there are also Greek wordplays. This linguistic skill suggests his Diaspora upbringing.[4]

2) Date of Writing

It is believed that this Gospel was written after Mark. The Trinitarian formula of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Mt. 28:19) was one of the facets of the developed church. This makes scholars to think that it is post 70 CE.[5] Besides, Matthew is the only Gospel where we found the word 'church' (Mt. 16:18; 18:15, 17, 21). This makes us think that it was written after there was a formal and structuralized church set up. Brown opines that it can be somewhere between 80-100 CE.[6]

3) Community

The Gospel according to Matthew reflects the life and concerns of a particular Christian community. Matthew has long been known as the most ecclesiastical Gospel, the only Gospel to use the word *church* to describe the community of believers (16:18; 18:17). It is suggested that the Gospel according to Matthew was written in Palestine,[7] Palestinian Jewish environment,[8] Transjordanian situation[9] or Alexandria.[10] Meanwhile, R. E. Brown and Guthrie accepted Mathew's community/ audience is Antioch of Syria.[11]

There seemed to be more Jews in Antioch than any place in Syria, and attracted many Gentiles. After the martyrdom of Stephen (ca. 36 CE; Acts 8:1) Hellenistic Jewish Christians were scattered from Jerusalem and came to Antioch and they spoke to gentiles as well. The Gospel of Matthew has traditionally and popularly been known as the Jewish Gospel, sometimes over against Luke or John as the Gentile Gospel. Matthew, of course, has interests that are distinctively Jewish (e.g., concern for the law, Sabbath, Temple). He feels no need to explain Jewish customs, as did his Markan source (cf. Matt 15:1 to Mark 7:1-4). Matthew's Gospel contains texts that suggest that his community is still subject to the disciplinary measures of the synagogue authorities (10:17-23; 23:2), and perhaps that it still keeps the Sabbath (24:20).[12]

Matthew was written as a Christian response to the Judaism that was emerging after 70 CE at Jamnia where the rabbis were revered as interpreters of the Law. Matthew 10:17 predicts that Jesus' disciples will be scourged in the Synagogues who were subject to the Synagogue authority. If that is the situation, the Matthean Christians would still be under synagogue obedience.[13]

It is traditionally believed that the author was a Jew writing for Jews. It is supposed that there were some opponents who rose against the life and works of Christ. So, Matthew played an apologetic role and wrote the infancy narrative and showed the legitimacy of Jesus. Such kind of apology is found in the resurrection narrative in which the bribing of the guards which would refute any allegation that the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus.[14]

4) Purposes

The Evangelist wrote his Gospel for various purposes:

a) Fulfilment of the OT prophecy in Jesus: One of the most outstanding characteristics of Matthew throughout his account is the OT citations and its fulfilment in Jesus. He tried to show that the major events in the

life of Jesus took place in fulfilment of prophecy (Mt. 2:17, 23; 4:14; 13:14; 26:54, 56; 27:9 etc).

b) Apologetic: Matthew Gospel would have answered many questions about Jesus which may have been raised against him by columnists. For instance, the infancy narrative (Mt. 1-2) would answer any charge of illegitimacy against Jesus. Similarly, the story of the bribing of the guard refuted any allegation that the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus (Mt. 28:12-15).

c) Liturgical Purpose: The Gospel is a revision of a lectionary which grew up in answer to the liturgical needs of some Christian community. The author intended to put into more permanent form the liturgical material already in use.

d) It was designed for teachers and Church Leaders: K. Stendahl asserted that the author of the first Gospel, who is conceived as a Christian Rabbi, produced the book in the form of 'a manual for teaching and administration within the church.'

MARK

1) Authorship

Like the other three Gospels, this Gospel is anonymous and contains neither allusions nor clues to authorship.[15] Traditionally, however, it became known as the "Gospel according to Mark"[16] because of (the oldest tradition which we find) Papias, who mentioned Markos as the author of the Gospel, who wrote down the reports of Peter from memory.[17] As a result, the title 'the Gospel according to Mark' was attached to it by the end of the 2nd century.

The Mark whom Papias named as the author of Mark Gospel is identified with the John Mark of Acts, whose mother had a house in Jerusalem. He was the follower and interpreter of Peter. He accompanied Paul and Barnabas on the 'First Missionary Journey.' Although there is no unanimity about the author, John Mark can be the most appropriate author of this Gospel.

2) Date of Writing

According to our earliest tradition (anti-Marcionite prologue; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies.* 3.1.1, c. 160/80 CE), Mark wrote after Peter's death in Rome, assumed to be c. 64–65 CE during Nero's rule.[18] Many scholars dated it as 60-75 CE, most likely between 68-73 CE.[19]

3) Community

By the end of the 2nd century CE, Clement of Alexandria cited Rome as the place where Mark wrote the Gospel. The presence of Greek loanwords in Mark, derived from Latin and of expression reflecting Latin grammar may suggest a locale where Latin was spoken.[20] In the meantime, there are also some other suggestions about the destination to which the Gospel was written such as Antioch, Egypt, but they are weak in their argument. So we can suggest that Rome is more likely to be the place where Mark was written. In the meantime, there are also some other suggestions about the destination to which the Gospel was written such as Antioch, [21] Egypt,[22] but Guthrie refuted that they are weak in their argument and he concluded that Rome with its internal and external support is more likely to be correct.

Scholars, such as R. E. Brown supposes that Mark addressed a community that had been persecuted. Perhaps this was a Roman persecution. Although Christians were harassed in various places, only capital city's Christian community is known to have undergone major Roman persecution before 70 CE under Nero.[23]

The majority of Roman Christians were lower-class immigrants, both Jew and Gentile, organized in several quite diverse house church communities. Mark commonly portrays Jesus explaining his public teaching to the disciples inside a house (1:29-33; 2:1, 15; 3:19; 7:24). This detail may have reminded readers of their own instruction in household churches. Christianity had emerged among the Jewish population in Rome by 48 CE. A few Roman Christians enjoyed higher status than the artisans, laborers, and tradespersons of the majority. By the time Paul wrote Romans (c. 57 CE), Gentile Christians were in the majority and had to be warned against lording it over the Jewish Christians who had founded the churches in the city.[24]

Mark's Gospel is traditionally associated with Rome. There are two suggestions as to the life setting of the Gospel:

a) The Persecutions of the Roman Church CE 65-67

In 64 CE, a devastating fire broke out in Rome. As a result, the Roman church was experiencing the fires of persecution under Nero. Many died in that persecution. It is believed that Mark was writing a book for the guidance and support of his fellow Christians in a situation of intense crisis. Knowing their miserable condition, Mark prepared his Christian readers by placing before them the passion experience of Jesus. About one-third of Mark's Gospel is devoted to the death of Jesus.[25] In this

way, the readers would be consoled that they had to suffer because their master too suffered a lot.

b) The Emergence of Heretical Theological Teachings

Thus in Mark we find the emphasis on Jesus' true humanity, highlighted by his sufferings. Theologically the recipients had an overheated expectation of an imminent parousia (wherefore Mk. 13), probably activated by persecution which they had undergone and during which a considerable number had failed.[26]

4) Purposes of Writing

It is understood that Gospels and epistles are very much different in style and form (genre). But they share similarity that they were written purposefully. Just as Paul wrote letters to certain churches to encourage, rectify certain social and doctrinal problems, to admonish etc., Gospels were also written by someone for someone to some places. Mark's purpose of writing the Gospel can be summarized as follows:

a) Mark's intention is to write a 'Gospel', an account of the good news about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This distinguishes the book from a biography and explains the large proportion of space devoted to the last three weeks of the life of Jesus.

b) To account for the historical events of the life of Jesus, not his birth. Mark had no reason to introduce Jesus from his birth narrative or the early accounts of Jesus. He directly dealt with Jesus as Christ, the Son of God, as a historical fact. He assumed that his readers would know at once to whom he is referring to.

c) To show Jesus' innocence. Mark tried to show that Jesus is the messiah and he is innocent of Jewish charges and that his sufferings were part of God's purpose.

d) To address the suffering of Christians. Mark tried to explain that Christians have to suffer because Jesus himself had to suffer.

e) Mark presented the works of Jesus as a triumph over the forces of evil.

LUKE

1) Authorship

The author of this Gospel is regarded as Luke the companion of Paul (supported by P^{75}, Irenaeus and Muratorian Fragment). He was an educated Greek speaker and skilled writer who knew the Jewish scripture in Greek. He was not an eyewitness of Jesus' ministry. He was probably

not raised as a Jew, but a convert to Judaism before he became a Christian. He is not a Palestinian.

2) Date of Writing

Though there are some who assumed that Luke was written as early as c. 60 CE[27] Brown's suggestion about 85 CE[28] is more likely as Luke did a thorough investigation after there were some people who have tried to do so. The need for proper investigation, though does not necessarily mean that it must be as late as 85s, yet demands a considerable lapse of time between the actual incident and the work of investigation.

3) Community

Luke was a Gentile Christian who wrote his Gospel for the Gentile church of the late first century CE; that it was a pastoral document concerned with issues within the church.[29]

The destination of Luke's Gospel is not certain. While R. E. Brown suggested Greece,[30] Donald Guthrie, although says that it is uncertain, states that Rome is suitable for it.[31] External tradition does not tell us from or to where the gospel was written. The tradition that Luke was a companion of Paul raises likelihood that Luke-Acts was addressed to churches descended from the Pauline mission. More specifically a late 2nd century CE Prologue reports that the Gospel was written in Greece (Achaia) and that Luke died there.[32] Luke probably wrote the Gospel in a city of the Roman empire where Hellenistic culture was strong or even dominant. According to Esler Lukan community is a mixture of Jews and gentiles, in which each group is significant. [33]

Luke's preface tells us that his Gospel is dedicated to one man, Theophilus. There is a view that Theophilus is a coined name to represent any 'lover of God,' but some scholars believe that he is a real person. Those who take Theophilus as a real person assume that he is was a gentile that the Gospel was primarily designed for all people in a similar category of Theophilus, that means gentiles who love God.[34]

Esler argued that Theophilus may or may not have been typical of the reading public for whom the work was intended; its real readers may well have been different.[35] Brown supposes the Gospel is written for the Gentiles, not with the Jews (Acts 28:25-28),[36] and this is reflected again in Luke' main characteristic, i.e., his universalism.[37] For Matthean church the synagogue has become a foreign institution while for Luke's addressees the synagogue was always a foreign institution. So, according to Brown, this Gospel can be accepted to be written in and to an area of Greece,[38] but Guthrie concluded that this kind of decision is

mere supposition that we do not know the destination of Luke's work.[39] Brown seeks his argument internally and says that Greece would match the internal evidence (Acts 16:9-10). Luke's audience is not a single house church or even living in one city but the Christians of the same background spread over a large region.[40]

We come to know that scholars are not unanimous about the destination or Luke. Whatever the place of destination is, there is no good reason to think that Theophilus is not a real person but an ambiguous addressee that can mean anyone who loves God, thus the meaning of the name. Letters or Gospels those days were not meant for public at large or for strategic notes for conversion. Rather it was mainly for the nourishment of the new and primitive churches who did not encounter Jesus and his ministry or the eyewitnesses' (mostly apostles) ministry. In other words, they (Gospels and epistles) were mainly for internal purposes. This implicitly says that there was no harm in singling out a person's name as immediate reader.

Luke's intention was apologetic that he tried to convince the pagan authorities of Rome that Christianity was politically harmless. Esler continued that Luke's audience was none other than the Christian. They might be a particular Christian community and most probably he wrote it for his local congregation.[41]

Robert J. Karris suggests two controversies faced by Luke's community: internal and external. Internally he engaged in polemic against Jewish Christians who seek to apply overly strict entrance requirement to those who want to join reconstituted Israel. These Christians were the Pharisees of the Gospel who objects to Jesus' eating habits and association with sinners and toll collectors. Social status, ethnic heritage, and religious self-justification do not qualify for membership in this group. The lame, blind and maimed belong to this elect group (14:13, 21) as well as well-to-do gentile Christians. The external problems which Luke's communities face are those of harassment, primarily from local Jewish synagogue leaders.[42]

4) Purposes

a) Luke, in his preface, wrote that his purpose is 'to write an orderly account' (Lk. 1:1-4). He intended to carry out after great care in ascertaining the facts. In short, Luke meant to write a historical account.

b) Luke brought out the theological significance of the history. For instance, Luke depicted the dramatic progress of Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem. Jesus was moving on towards Jerusalem to die. That was Luke's Gospel and his theology, rather than Jerusalem itself.

c) Luke's intention was apologetic that he tried to convince the pagan authorities of Rome that Christianity was politically harmless.

d) To help the Christian readers know that there was nothing revolutionary in their origins, nothing that should cause them to be in conflict with Roman governance, and that it was wrong to believe that Jesus and his immediate disciples as Jewish revolutionaries who added fuel to fire in the war against the Roman Empire in the late 60s.

e) Luke tries to explain about the three stages of salvation history. This is one of his main theological concerns. According to Hans Conzelmann, Luke divided salvation history into three:[43]

   i) The time of Israel (Lk. 16:16);

   ii) The time of the ministry of Jesus as the intrinsic time of salvation; the centre of time (Lk. 4:16ff; Acts 10:38);

   iii) The time of the church as a time of struggle with doubt and of patience.

Endnotes

1 J. H. Ropes, *The Synoptic Gospels* (1934), 103f., quoted in Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1965), 31.
2 From the interpretation of Papias' word, *logia* in Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* 3:39. 16.
3 Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction the New Testament* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2007), 210f.
4 Brown, 211.
5 Kümmel, 84.
6 Brown, 216.
7 Brown, *An Introduction the New Testament,* 212;
8 Papias. Streeter argued that this belief belonged to Papias and therefore unreliable. Burnett Hillman Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (London: Macmillan and Co. Limited, 1930), 500.
9 H. D. Slingerland, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* (1979), 18-28 Quoted By Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction,* 39.
10 S. Van Tilborg, *The Jewish Leaders In Matthew* (1972), 172 Quoted By Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction,* 39.
11 Brown, *An Introduction the New Testament,* 212f; Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction,* 39.
12 M. Eugene Boring, *New Interpreter's Bible: The Gospel of Matthew*, vol. VIII (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 97.
13 Brown, *An Introduction the New Testament,* 215.
14 Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction,* 33.

[15] Robert A. Guelich, “Mark, Gospel Of,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 514.
[16] Guelich, “Mark, Gospel of,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 514.
[17] Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament,* 69.
[18] Guelich, “Mark, Gospel of,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 514.
[19] Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 127.
[20] Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 161. He Gives Some Examples That *Legion* (Legion) In 5:9, 15; *Denarion* (Denarius) In 6:37; 12:15; 14:5 Etc. Different Theologians Have Different Suggestion About The Locale Of Mark Such As H. Kee (Southern Syria), E. Lohmeyer, R. H. Lightfoot And W. Marxsen (Galilee Or Jerusalem).
[21] C. V. Barlet, *St. Mark* (1922), quoted in Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1990), 74.
[22] Suggested By Chrysostom. Cf., V. Taylor, *Mark,* 32 Quoted By Guthrie, 74.
[23] Brown, *An Introduction the New Testament,* 162.
[24] Pheme Perkins, *New Interpreter’s Bible: The Gospel of Mark*, vol. VIII (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 514.
[25] Walter W. Wessel, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: The Gospel of Mark*, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984).
[26] Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament,* 163.
[27] Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 115.
[28] Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament,* 274.
[29] John Nolland, *Word Biblical Commentary: Luke 1:1-9:20*, vol. 35a (Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1998).
[30] Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament,* 270f.
[31] Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction,* 110.
[32] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Luke the Theologian* (New York: Paulist, 1989), 38f.
[33] Philip Francis Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 31.
[34] Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction,* 109.
[35] Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts*, 24.
[36] Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament,* 270f; Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction,* 109.
[37] Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction,* 109.
[38] Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament,* 270.
[39] Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction,* 110.
[40] Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament,* 270f.
[41] Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts*, 25.
[42] Robert J. Karris, “The Gospel According to Luke,” in *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy (Bangalore: Theological Publications In India, 2002), 676.
[43] Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, trans., Geoffrey Buswell (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, [1960], 1982), 17.

CHAPTER 4

Synoptic Problem

Introduction

Within the New Testament there exists four works that bear the name Gospel. Although all four of these books are anonymous, early tradition has ascribed to them the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of Mark, the Gospel of Luke and the Gospel of John. The first three Gospels in the NT canon— Matthew, Mark and Luke—are known as the **Synoptic Gospels**, because they can be viewed side by side ("synoptically") and compared very easily by means of a synopsis. The reason for this is that all three Gospels have a great deal of material in common and very often they present their material in the same order.[1]

Synoptic Problem

It is quite vivid that the first three Gospels have similarities and dissimilarities (as described below). In the mean time, it is also clear that three of these four resemble each other to a great extent, both in their wording and their ordering of materials.[2] The first three Gospels, because of the extensive agreement of their materials are put in a parallel column for the sake of comparison. This type of agreement is called a synopsis. So, the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark and Luke are known as the Synoptic Gospels and their authors are called the Synoptists. The similarity of material evidenced by this arrangement coupled with notable dissimilarities within the first three gospels given rise to a problem which is called the Synoptic Problem.[3] The passages that are common to the three Synoptic Gospels are called the '**threefold tradition**.' The '**twofold tradition**' designates passages found in two Synoptic Gospels, and '**unique traditions**' are those contained in a single witness, Matthew, Mark or Luke.

Another traditions employed twice in the same Gospel are called '**doublets**.'[4] In fact, more time, effort and scholarly investigation have been spent on this Synoptic Problem than any other biblical issue.[5]

Characteristics of the Synoptic Gospels

	Matthew	Mark	Luke
Total verses	1070/1086	677/661	1150/1149
Unique tradition	330 (approx. 1/3)	70 (approx. 1/10)	520 (approx. 1/2)
Twofold tradition	170-180 (Mt. & Mk.) 230 (Mt. & Lk.)	170-180 (Mk. & Mt.) 50 (Mk. & Lk.)	230 (Lk. & Mt.) 50 (Lk. & Mk.)
Threefold tradition	350-370	350-370	350-370

Similarities

1) Content

On the whole, the first three Gospels contain the same words and deeds of Jesus. The miracles, parables, discussions and principal events in his life are depicted by these Gospels.[6]

Mark is the shortest among these three Gospels. Almost the whole of its material occurs also in Matthew or in Luke or in both. Only few materials are peculiar to Mark (e.g., 7:3336; 8:22-26). The chart given below shows its interrelationship and their identical contents:[7]

2) Arrangement

The course of the life of Jesus and his activity are presented in a similar fashion.[8]

3) Language

Many passages show agreement in language or wording. Sometimes all three will agree on an OT quote that is different from both MT and LXX. The words of Jesus are often reported in identical Greek. Sometimes all three or at least two of them use unusual Greek constructions or the same comparatively rare Greek words.[9]

Dissimilarities

1) Content

While some events are recounted by only two of the Evangelists, others are proper to only one. Even then, the two accounts of the same event differ at times.[10]

2) Arrangement

Although in general there is agreement in the arrangement of the Gospel materials, it must be noted that there are some differences. Where one author groups the material together in one place, the other scatters it throughout his work.[11]

The Problem

The above similarities and dissimilarities bring several questions and problems. While there is a great agreement in the incidents or sayings of Jesus or other accounts, there are inconsistencies regarding the chronology of what happened. Serious question arise:

1) Why these accounts do not agree exactly if the evangelists write exactly what happened and what was said?
2) Whereas Jesus spoke and taught primarily in Aramaic, these agreements in wordings are in Greek! It is unlikely that each writer would have translated the saying and actions of Jesus from Aramaic into Greek in exactly the same manner.
3) Why, when John reports a similar incident or saying in the life of Jesus, there is little or no exactness present in the wording.[12]

   Certain questions can be raised: was not John also guided by the Spirit in the writing of his Gospel in order to agree with the other Gospels? If the Spirit's inspiration caused these agreements, why are there also differences? If the Spirit is the cause of the similarities, who then is the cause of these differences?[13] The best possible answer to solve the problem is to discover the earliest source or sources so that the alteration or the most authentic account(s) could be displayed. Such attempts have been tried endlessly. The investigation to sort out this problem is called 'source criticism' which we will study in the next chapter.

Endnotes

1 C. M. Tuckett, "Synoptic Gospel," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, [1992], 1997).

[2] Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 15.
[3] Frederick Gast, "Synoptic Problem," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2002), 587.
[4] Gast, 588.
Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 16.
[6] Gast, *JBC* 40:5.
[7] Gast, *JBC* 40:6.
[8] John the Baptist appears, Jesus is baptized by him and enters into the desert of temptation. After this, he begins his public life. The greater part of Jesus' activity centres in Galilee and in the regions bordering it (Decapolis, Philip's territory). His journey to Jerusalem and his trials are put in similar fashion. All of them close with his crucifixion and resurrection. There are also sections in which similar materials are placed together, e.g., Sabbath stories, parables. The Synoptic Gospels also presented the separate, characteristic sayings of Jesus, short discourses and fragments of discourses. Gast, *JBC* 40:7.
[9] Gast, *JBC* 40:8.
[10] Gast, *JBC* 40:9. For example, Matthew and Luke give the history of Jesus' infancy, whereas Mark does not; yet these two accounts of Matthew and Luke differ considerably. This can be seen in genealogy of Jesus (Mt 1:1-17; Lk 3:23-38). The same three temptations of Jesus are narrated by Matthew and Luke, but the order is changed (Mt 4:3-12; Lk 4:3-12). Even the reports of the resurrection have no uniform tradition.
[11] Gast, *JBC* 40:10. The parable section is common to all three, but each has a different number of parables. In Matthew the sayings are grouped in five great discourses of Jesus, whereas in Luke, much of this material appears during Jesus' long journey to Jerusalem (9:51-18:14). The best examples of this are the number of petitions to be found in the "Our Father" (Mt 6:9-15 and Lk 11:2-4) and the number of the Beatitudes (Mt 5:3-11 and Lk 6:20b-22).
[12] Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 33.
[13] Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 33.

CHAPTER 5

Source Criticism

Introduction

The term “source criticism” can be used in a very general as well as in a restricted sense. Used in the general sense, “source” is actually synonymous with “tradition,” no matter how extensive it is or how it is handed down. In the restricted sense, “source” refers to *a written text that has been used by an author in his own writing*. It is the task of NT source criticism to find out whether or not individual NT writers have made use of older written texts as sources.[1] Thus, source criticism tends to study the earlier record(s) on which the later based on it/them. It is hoped that the knowledge of this will help in sorting out the synoptic problem so that we can tell which text is the most likely or genuine.

Literary interdependence

Literary interdependence means that the Evangelists used the other’s written material(s). There is no chance, according to this theory, that the source is oral tradition because some of the materials in the Gospels are too identical, even some words within the parenthesis (bracket) are identical. This cannot be because of mere coincidence. It is incredible that they coincidentally inserted the same editorial comment at exactly the same placeWe are, therefore, obliged to say that they mutually used each other.[2] In the history of investigating the Synoptic Problem, a number of attempts have been made to explain the various similarities by means of common oral tradition. J. G. von Herder made such proposal in 1796. J. K. L. Gieseler developed more fully in 1818. Gieseler argued that behind the Synoptic Gospels there was an oral tradition, which was originally created by the Apostles for the purpose of preaching. It was then translated from Aramaic into Greek and was used by the Evangelists.[3]

Stein argues that the general agreement between the Synoptic Gospels show that there was a common literary source. Unless it was there, memorizing a whole Gospel of such material in a specific order is too doubtful.[4] In the meantime, the arrangement of the Gospels is not exactly similar in terms of chronology, and much other dissimilarity is also found as mentioned above. Therefore, a difficult question arise why do many inconsistencies are there while the Gospels are written upon the same events, sayings and accounts?

We can now come to the point that the agreements in the Synoptic Gospels indicates that the writers of the Gospels had at least some written source materials other than the mere oral tradition. Otherwise, such a huge identical agreement would be impossible for them to recall and write them in such manner. On the other hand, many other accounts are found only in one or two Gospels conveying that they had their own particularity or other dependents other than the Synoptic Gospels themselves. That may also means the existence of more than one or two sources. We cannot simply rely on the mutual interdependence among them. It is liable that the Evangelist had their own particularity or other literary source as a source. This creates another problem which would be prior to others, playing a role of a source material and how can we solve these agreements and dissimilarities which is also known as the Synoptic Problem.

History of Synoptic Problem's Solution

In the 18th century, true chronology was regarded as essential for true history. The conflict in the chronology of the canonical Gospels are regarded as follows: (1) clement of Alexandria states that the Gospels with genealogies (Matthew and Luke) were written before the Gospels without genealogies (Mark and John); Augustine held that no Evangelist wrote his Gospel in ignorance of the work of his predecessor or predecessors and that the order was Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; (3) Papias states that Mark was the interpreter of Peter and regards his Gospel as based on the witness of Peter.[5]

Pre-Markan Sources

Often it is argued that Mark itself made use of orally transmitted collections of materials or shorter written sources for some parts of his gospel: (a) controversies, Mark 2:1–3:6; (b) parables, Mark 4:1–34; (c) miracle stories, Mark 4:35–8:26; (d) pronouncement stories, Mark 11+12; (e) apocalyptic discourse, Mark 13; (f) Passion narrative, Mark 14:1–16:8. In all of these cases, however, there is no indisputable evidence. The fact that four pericopes of Mark are missing in Matthew and Luke (Mark

3:20–21; 4:26–29; 7:31–37; 8:22–26) has led to the assumption that it was not the canonical gospel of Mark which was the source for Matthew and Luke, but rather an earlier version *("Ur-Markus")* which did not contain these texts. Similarly, the absence of Mark 6:45–8:26 in Luke has been explained by the assumption that Luke used a mutilated copy of the gospel of Mark (this would mean a Deutero-Mark). These assumptions, however, are precarious, because there are no reasons for these alleged developments of the gospel of Mark; on the other hand, most of these omissions can be explained as deliberate shortenings by Matthew and Luke.[6]

In 1783, Greisbach (1745-1812), holding to Augustine's view that no one of the Evangelists did his work in ignorance of that of his predecessor(s), Mark could not be understood simply as an 'epitomiser' of Matthew. Griesbach proposed that Mark was written later than Luke and was dependent upon both Matthew and Luke.[7] According to Griesbach, the Apostle Matthew wrote in Greek on the basis of what he himself knew without recourse to older sources. Luke wrote his Gospel on the basis of his researches into the still fluid tradition and with reference to Matthew's Gospel; Mark used extracts from both of these Gospels to present his own Gospel as a summary.[8]

The Two-Source Hypothesis and Its Development

The Two-Source Hypothesis can be summarized in the following propositions:[9]

1) In the sections common to the three Synoptics (the Triple Tradition), Matthew and Luke depend on Mark;
2) In the sections common only to Matthew and Luke (the DoubleTradition), these two gospels depend on a second source,designated by the letter "Q" (for the German *Quelle*="source"), which was made up almost exclusively of *logia* ("sayings"). We will discuss 'Q' in the following division.

According to two-source hypothesis, the two sources are MARK and Q, that is the sayings.

Christian H. Weisse (1801-1866) was the first to propound the two-source ("'sayings' of Matthew and Mark") hypothesis in 1838.[10] Weisse might be the first in using the technical term Two-Source Hypothesis, yet the first step to suppose the existence of a primitive gospel (a so-called "Ur-gospel") on which the three Synoptic Gospels depended was worked out chiefly by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781) in a work which, though written in 1778, was only published in 1784 after the author's death. Lessing pointed out that in Acts 24:5, the early Christians

are called Nazarenes. He inferred that they would have produced a written Gospel based on an oral tradition from the Apostles. This purely hypothetical Gospel he sought to identify with a Gospel now lost, but known to the Church Fathers sometimes as the **Gospel of the Hebrews**, and sometimes as the **Gospel of the Nazarenes**. This hypothetical Gospel was written in Aramaic (called Ur-Gospel) and originated soon after the death of Jesus.[11] Lessing conjectured that Matthew, Mark and Luke were mere translations of an original this Aramaic Gospel of the Nazarenes (or Ur-Gospel), which each one of the writers made as best as he could.[12]

After this, J. G. Eichhorn (in 1794), H. Marsh (1798), Credner (1836) reworked on this. C. H. Weisse (1801-1866) then simplified the theory. He abandoned te Ur-Marcus. After him, H. H. Holtzmann, in 1863 and P. Wernle (1899) took up the research.

At the moment, the Two-Source Hypothesis was accepted by a very large number of exegetes all over the world. It is expounded in all the introductions to the NT. But this hypothesis strongly argues that Mark is the earliest Gospel because the supporters of this hypothesis need to accept Markan priority. Further this, one has also needed to accept the existence of another source other than Mark so far as the material common to Matthew and Luke but unknown to Mark is concerned. As a result, Markan Priority and the theory of 'Q' also need further analysis.

The Priority of Mark

This means that Mark is the earliest Gospel other than Matthew, Luke and John. B. H. Streeter, after an in-depth study of the interdependence of the Synoptic Gospels, opined that if Mark is the older document and if Matthew and Luke both used Mark, they must have used it in the same way. He supported Burkitt's assumption that Matthew is a *fresh edition* of Mark, revised, rearranged, and enriched with new material. Luke is a new historical work made by combining parts of Mark with parts of other documents.[13] Streeter developed the following points to explain Marcan priority to other Gospels:[14]

1) Mark has about 661 verses. Out of these, Matthew uses about 600 verses. Mark's style is diffused, Matthew's style is concise. That means Matthew employs 51% of the actual words used by Mark. Luke also reproduces about 350 verses (over one half of Mark) of Mark. When following Mark, Luke alters the wording of his original. On the other hand, he retains many details of which Matthew omits. The result is that, Luke retains 53% of the actual words of Mark, a slightly higher proportion than Matthew does.

2) While one or both of them are constantly in close agreement with Mark, they never support one another against Mark. This is a clear evidence, for Streeter, for the originality of Marcan version, and is that Matthew and Luke were independently reproducing Mark, adapting his language to their own individual style.
3) The order of incidents in Mark is clearly the more original; for whether Matthew departs from Mark's order Luke supports Mark, and whenever Luke departs from Mark, Matthew agrees with Mark (except Mk. 3:31-35).
4) Marcan form looked most primitive other than the other Gospels. Reverential motive explains well. In Mark, Jesus is only once addressed as "Lord", and that was also not by a Jew (the Syrophoenician). He is regularly saluted as *Rabbi,* or by its Greek equivalent *teacher*. In Matthew, *Lord* occurs 19 times; in Luke 16 times, *Master* 6 times. Mark's "He *could* do there *no* mighty work" (6:5) becomes "He *did not many* mighty works" (Mt. 13:58) while Luke omits the limitation altogether. While Mark preserves 8 original Aramaic words, Matthew retains only one and Luke has none.

Besides these points, Robert Stein also pointed out some Marcan Priority as follows:[15]

1) Mark's Shortness

As compare to Matthew and Luke, Mark is much shorter.[16] 97.2% of the words in Mark have a parallel in Matthew and 88.4% have a parallel in Luke. The use of Matthew and/or Luke by Mark seems least likely because, why would mark omit so much material if Mathew or Luke were his source? Why would he omit everything concerning Jesus' birth, the birth of John the Baptist, the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord's Prayer etc. some scholars argued that Mark did this so as to provide a shorter Gospel for use in the Church. This explanation postulates that it was for the purpose of providing an abridge Gospel that Mark omitted so much of Matthew and/or Luke when he copied them. Stein argued against this view that regarding the length, when we compare the individual pericope that they have in common, we find that Mark is always the longest! It is clear that far from being abridgement, Mark is usually the longest of the parallel accounts.

2) Colloquialisms and Incorrect Grammar

Several such Colloquialisms and incorrect grammar are found in Mark that is not found in Matthew or Luke.[1717] For instance: In Mk 10:20, the rich Youngman said, "All these I have *observed* …" The parallels in Mt 19:20 and Lk 18:21 change the verb to evfuvlaxa. Mark used as an

aorist middle [first person], in which Matthew and Luke have changed to the correct aorist active [first person]. Such a change by Matthew and Luke is quite understandable, but an intentional change by Mark from correct grammar to incorrect grammar is not.

3) Redundancy

Another argument in favour of the priority of Mark the presence of numerous clumsy redundancies in Mark that are not found in Matthew or Luke. Out of many examples, one is from Mk 1:32 and its parallel (Mt 8:16 and Lk 4:40) where we see, "That evening, at sundown, they brought…" This unnecessary and clumsy material, *evening* and *sundown* is polished by the other Gospel parallels so on and so forth.

4) Mark's Harder in Readings

The presence of various kinds of difficulties in reading in Mark that are not found in Matthew and/or Luke is another argument for Marcan priority.[18]

In textual criticism the presence of a harder reading in a manuscript is usually seen as evidence for its being more primitive or authentic.

The Sayings Source (Q)

Explaining why Matthew and Luke resemble each other in their materials,[19] Stein shows four possible explanations:

1) Luke may have known/used Matthew;
2) Matthew may have known Luke;
3) Matthew and Luke may have used common oral material; or
4) Matthew and Luke may have used a common written source or sources.

Point (2) is seldom argued today because the priority of Luke is seldom argued.[20] Regarding point (1), it is believed by some scholars that Luke is earlier than Matthew that this point is not agreeable. One example is given by Joseph A. Fitzmyer. He says that the careful writer, Luke would not break up the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7, the masterpiece of Matthew and scattered them in a far less artistic fashion throughout his Gospel if he used Matthew as his source.[21] This means that Luke is earlier than Matthew. This means that Luke did not use Matthew nor Matthew used Luke as source material.

If Luke did not get the material of the double tradition from Matthew (nor Matthew from Luke), then some other source or sources must have provided this material for both of them. This unknown source, that must

also be a written source, is called as 'Q'. It is a German word, 'Quell', that means *source*. The designation **Q** has been used for the last one hundred years as the symbol of this *source* or *sources*.[22]

It is noticeable that approximately 200 verses appear in both Matthew and Luke, according to Streeter, that must have been derived from elsewhere than Mark.[23] Even after accepting the proof that Mark was used as a source by Matthew and Luke, there remains the task of explaining the agreements between Matthew and Luke which go beyond Mark's material. Matthew and Luke together contain numerous sections that are not attested by Mark, above all the "words or sayings" (logia) of Jesus. The literary connections between Matthew and Luke are often so close that one has to admit either to their mutual dependence on one another or to their use of the same source.[24] The composition is generally dated between CE 50 and 70. Judging from the rural features of many Q traditions, most scholars argue for the Northern part of Palestine and the Southern part of Syria as being its place of its (Q) origin.[25]

Another question still remaining is whether this Q is in an oral tradition or in a written form. Streeter supports a hypothesis that Matthew and Luke made use of a single common document. He accepted that this hypothetical source is referred to as "Q," which was spoken of as "the Logia" or the "double tradition" in the older books.[26] Streeter said, in supporting the Q document as a written source, "Where, however, a number of consecutive saying occur in two Gospels with approximately the same wording, or where a detached saying is not of a quasi-proverbial character, a documentary source is more probable."[27] Stein sets the *exactness of the wording of the Q material* and *the order of the material* as arguments for the Q as a written source material.[28]

We can summarize that this Q source is a written document of about 200 verses that might be written between 50-70 CE. This is a collection of Jesus' sayings that are not found in Mark but common in Matthew and Luke. Sermon on the Mount is one of the examples.

A Four Document Hypothesis

The Two-Source is not free from difficulties and it can never be proved with mathematical finality. Matthew and Luke also have further material peculiar to their gospels alone. In order to settle this remaining problem, Burnett Hillman Streeter postulated further documents relating to these strands of the tradition and proposed a "Four-Document Hypothesis" (corresponding to the four basic strands of the tradition: Mark, Q, M, and L). Streeter found out that hardly any of the parables are found in Q to realize that a large part of the most obviously genuine, original and

characteristic teaching of Jesus is derived, not from Q, but sources peculiar to Matthew or Luke.[29]

In his new hypothesis, Streeter suggests Q and L (Luke), besides Mark as the source or Luke. He assigns Matthew's third source (other than Q and Mark) all discourse peculiar to Matthew; he calls this, M. He also retains Q as the name of the source of the close parallels only.[30] He now has Q, Mark, L (Luke's special) and M (Matthew's special) documents.

The material peculiar to Matthew is characterized by a conspicuously Jewish atmosphere. The source 'M' will naturally be connected with Jerusalem, the head-quarters of the James party.[31] He connected Luke's special source 'L' with Caesarea as its origin. He regards Antioch, the first capital of Gentile Christianity as a possible place for the origin of Q. Unlike Lessing, Streeter assumed the Q source as a Greek document which the authors of the First and the Third Gospels had in common, and the fact that this document was known to the authors of both these Gospels means that it probably came to them with the backing of the Church of some important Greek city.[32]

Streeter claimed that his Four Document Hypothesis explains the curious mixture in Matthew of Judaistic with universalistic sayings, and the concurrence of conspicuously ancient along with some highly doubtful matter. Luke's Gospel bears the impress of individuality; Matthew has more of an official quality.

Conclusion

If we have a close and careful look at the first three Gospels, we would certainly experience interrelated materials which are arranged, sometimes in the same manner and like order, sometimes vary especially their chronological order. Therefore it is a must that there should be some reasons for that. Some common materials occur in the three or two of the Gospels, discussing the same incidents. But they are sometimes presented in different context or its chronology is/are changed.

Scholars have tried to solve this problem in different ways. They employ source criticism to come into solution. As a result, certain scholars inferred the existence of pre-Marcan source as a source of the Gospels; some propose Mark as the basis of Matthew and Luke; some holds Matthew as the source; the existence of the other sources apart from Mark is also accepted and called it Q source, someone called *Logia* so on and so forth. In the quest for the original source(s) of the Gospels, there has been a great debate and therefore arises Two

Source-Theory (Mark and Q) which serves as an easy and comprehensible solution for the Synoptic problem. Streeter, unsatisfied with the Two Source-Theory, propounded Four Document Hypothesis (Mark, Q, Matthew's special [M], and Luke's special [L] respectively). A modern theory is also come into being (for instance, O'Neill's theory) that denies Marcan priority and the existence of Q.

Within this debate, it is believable that there are inconsistencies in the Synoptic Gospels even though we accept the authenticity and authority. On account of its chronology, Luke cannot be identified as the first Gospel (Lk 1:1-3). Against the view of Augustine (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), Marcan priority is supportive. I support Streeter's argument that "Augustine did not possess a Synopsis of the Greek text conveniently printed in parallel column"[33] that Mark is prior to Matthew. This view is well equipped by the above convincing discussion concerning Marcan priority.

Although Two-Source Theory seems good so to explain the Synoptic Problem, yet Streeter's Four Document Hypothesis is quite relevant in order to solve the Synoptic Problem. Though it is not flawless,[34] it not only offers an extremely simple explanation of all the difficulties which the Two Document Hypothesis cannot satisfactorily meet, but also reflects far better the historical situation in the primitive church.[35] Further, the Lucan special and Matthean special, that the Two Source Hypothesis left out are explained nicely. The existence of the Q source, whether or not it is Q or Logia or Ur-Gospel or Ur-Marcus, appears to be quite relevant but not as a Semitic or Aramaic origin that all the Gospels used as a basis and translated from it. I assume it as a written Greek document, other than oral tradition as well because of the Hellenistic assimilation of the then context in every realm of lives. The Q or Mark as the first to come is doubtful. By the way, the Synoptic Problem is best explained by the Four Document Hypothesis even though it is not perfect.

Endnotes

1 Dietrich-Alex Koch, "Source Criticism," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, [1992], 1997).

2 Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 37, 38. One good example is Matthew 24:15-18 and Mark 13:14-16. **Matthew 24:15** "So when you see the desolating sacrilege standing in the holy place, as was spoken of by the prophet Daniel (**let the reader understand**)…" **Mark 13:14** "But when you see the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be (**let the reader understand**), then those in Judea must flee to the mountains…" The comment, "**let the reader understand**" is a most impressive agreement between Matthew and Mark. Such a comment could not be due to a common oral tradition because it does not refer to the "hearer" but rather to the "reader."

[3] Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 43.
[4] Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 43.
[5] William R. Farmer, *The Synoptic Problem: A Critical Analysis* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), 1f.
[6] Koch, "Source Criticism," *ABD.*
[7] Farmer, *The Synoptic Problem*, 7,8.
[8] Eta Linnemann, *Is There a Synoptic Problem?* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 28.
[9] M.-É. Boismard, "Two-Source Hypothesis," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, [1992], 1997).
[10] Linnemann, *Is There a Synoptic Problem?*, 32.
[11] Farmer, *The Synoptic Problem*, 4.
[12] Linnemann, *Is There a Synoptic Problem?*, 27.
[13] Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, 158.
[14] Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, 159-165.
[15] Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 48-63.
[16] Matthew consists of 661 verses, whereas Matthew contains 1068 and Luke 1149 verses. Mark contains 11,025 words, Matthew 18,293 and Luke 19,376 words. Of the words found in Mark, 132 have no parallel in Matthew or Luke; of the words found in Matthew, 3,102 have no parallel in Mark or Luke; and of the words found in Luke, 6700 have no parallel in Matthew or Mark. Of the 11,025 words found in Mark, only 304 have no parallel in Matthew and 1282 have no parallel in Luke. These word statistic come from Joseph B. Tyson and Thomas R. W. Longstaff, *Synoptis Abstract, The Computer Bible*, vol. 15 (Wooster, Ohio: College of Wooster, 1978), 169-171. It is quoted by Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 48.
[17] For instance: In Mk 10:20, the rich Youngman said, "All these I have *observed* [ἐφυλαξάμην]..." The parallels in Mt 19:20 and Lk 18:21 change the verb to ἐφύλαξα. Mark used as an aorist middle [first person], in which Matthew and Luke have changed to the correct aorist active [first person]. Such a change by Matthew and Luke is quite understandable, but an intentional change by Mark from correct grammar to incorrect grammar is not.
Another example can be seen in Mk. 2:4 where the paralytic is described as lying on a "pallet' [κράβαττου]. This term is a slang expression for "bed." Matthew and Luke changed this term to the more-acceptable "bed" [κλίνης] (Mt 9:2) and "bed" [κλινιδίῳ] (Lk. 5:19). A third example is seen in Mk. 1:12 in which after baptism, the Spirit "drove" [evkbavllei] Jesus to wilderness to be tempted. Matthew 4:1 has "Jesus was led [ἀνήχθη] by the Spirit" and Luke 4:1 states that Jesus "was led [ἦγετο] by the Spirit." In these cases, we see a refinement and more polished and improved literary form, and more easily understandable than the reverse, i.e., that Mark willingly chose to forsake the good Greek of Matthew and Luke for a cruder and more confusing term.
[18] For instance, **Mark 1:32-34a (RSV)**
"That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered together about the door. And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons..."
While these verses are hard to read, its parallels are much smoother.
Mt 8:16 "That evening they brought to him many who were possessed with demons; and he cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick."
Lk 4:40 "Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to him; and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them."
[19] Some other passages which show a similar exactness in the double tradition are Mt 3:7b-10/Lk 3:7b-9; Mt 7:3-5/Lk 6:41-42; Mt 11:4-6, 7b-11/Lk 7:22-23, 24b-28; Mt 11:21-23/Lk 10:13-15; Mt 12:43-45/Lk 11:24-26; Mt 24:45-51/Lk 12:42-46. Cf. Stein, op. cit., 90.
[20] Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 90, 91.
[21] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *To Advance the Gospel* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 18.
[22] Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 103.
[23] Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, 182.
[24] Boismard, "Two-Source Hypothesis," *ABD.*
[25] Koch, "Source Criticism," *ABD.*
[26] Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, 184.
[27] Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, 185.
[28] Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 104.
[29] Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, 228. He states that the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, the Pharisee and the Publican are peculiar to Luke; the Labourers in the Vineyard, the Pearl of Great Price are given by Matthew alone.
[30] Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, 231.
[31] Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, 232. It asserts the obligation of obeying not only the Law but the tradition of the scribes. It also has a distinctly anti-Gentile bias. It reflects the spirit and outlook with which in the New Testament the name of James is associated.
[32] Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, 232. For detail, see Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, 227-270.
[33] Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, 157.
[34] Streeter confessed that his hypothesis does not enable us to make a tidy scheme showing us exactly which saying or incidents belong to M, which to L, and which to Q etc. Cf. Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, 296.
[35] Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, 269.

CHAPTER 7

Redaction Criticism

Meaning of Redaction Criticism

According to Norman Perrin, Redaction criticism is an attempt to represent in English the German word *Redaktionsgeschichte* within the field of New Testament. It is concerned with studying the theological motivation of an author as this is revealed in the collection, arrangement, editing and modification of traditional material and in the composition of new material or the creation of new forms within the traditions of the early Christianity.[1] Redaction criticism is the study of NT texts that concentrates on the unique theological emphases that the writers place upon the materials they used, their specific purposes in writing their works, and the *Sitz im Leben* out of which they wrote. The term is a translation of the German *Redaktionsgeschichte,* which has also been translated "redaction history." Another German term sometimes used to describe this method of study is *Kompositionsgeschichte* or "composition criticism"[2] because it concerned with the composition of new material into new units and patterns, as well as with the redaction of existing material.[3]

Nature of Redaction Criticism

As we said in the chapter of Form Criticism, the form critics (Dibelius) viewed the Evangelists as the editors. He sternly expressed his view writing, "The composers of the [Gospels] are only to the smallest extent authors. They are principally collectors, vehicles of tradition, editors."[4] He regarded the Evangelists as "scissors-and-paste men" who simply glued together various Gospel traditions in order to produce "Jesus-material collections" or "gospel excerpts." Showing the weakness of the form criticism, Stein said that the individual pericopes were separated jewels arranged and given particular theological setting by each of the

authors. According to Stein, each editorial setting, which the form critics ignored and cast aside, shed light on different facets of the Gospel jewels and created a somewhat different portrait of Jesus.[5]

Norman Perrin's view about the evangelists is much different from Dibelius. According to Perrin, redaction criticism tends to think of the Evangelists as having a much more positive and creative role. In other words redaction criticism proper is dependent upon the ability to write a history of the tradition.[6]

The Rise of Redaction Criticism

It can be said that redaction criticism became popular in the mid-1950s with the publication of two major works. The first was Hans Conzelmann's *Die Mitte der Zeit* (*The Theology of St. Luke*), which appeared in 1954, and the second was Willi Marxsen's *Der Evangelist Markus* (*Mark the Evangelist*), which appeared in 1956.

Conzelmann found Luke as a creative theologian that his history is not a mere history, rather, a "salvation history" which was divided into three distinct stages:[7]

1) The period of Israel,
2) The period of Jesus (the "middle" of time),
3) The period of the Church.

He believed that, in so doing, Luke sought to solve the problem of the delay of the Parousia by means of a greater emphasis on realized eschatology.

Marxsen's major contribution lies in his discussion of the relationship of form and redaction criticism. Whereas the form critics spoke of two *Sitz im Leben*s (that of the historical Jesus and that of the early Church), Marxsen pointed out that there existed a third *Sitz im Leben* as well, and this was the situation in life of the Evangelists themselves.[8]

In contrast to the interests of form criticism, which were primarily sociological in orientation and sought to discover everything possible about the *Sitz im Leben* of the early Church during the oral period, Conzelmann and Marxsen focused upon the Evangelists and their individual contributions to their works. Whereas form criticism ignored the Evangelists and minimized their contribution in the writing of the gospels, Marxsen pointed out that the Evangelists were not simply collectors or editors of the traditions; they were, on the contrary, theologians. As a result, their works were not to be viewed simply as "Jesus-material collections" but as Gospels, and they should be investigated from the perspective of these individual writers.[9]

We are now informed that redaction criticism is the study of the text in its final form. The significance of the evangelist is emphasized here, unlike form criticism. They are not only collectors or editors or compilers, but are theologians who made use of their materials according to their need. The evangelists can be collectors in one way or the other. But those collected materials, small and isolated units, were lengthened and added details on them. Since they collected the circulated materials there are numbers of same stories and forms in the Gospels. But we can also believe that they lengthened and added details on those smaller units. Therefore, various dissimilarities are found in the same. The evangelists, when they reduced their materials into writing, they wrote according to the need of their audiences, in their respective skill of writing. This makes more differences among the Gospels. According to this finding, the evangelists are not mere collectors or compilers or editors.

In the meantime, it should not be assumed that before Conzelmann and Marxsen no one had emphasized the theological contribution of the Evangelists to the Gospel tradition. Men like W. Wrede, E. Lohmeyer, R. H. Lightfoot, J. M. Robinson, and G. Bornkamm had alluded to this earlier, but it was with the works of Conzelmann and Marxsen that redaction criticism came into its own, and the decades following their works saw this new discipline dominate gospel studies.[10]

The Method of Redaction Criticism

1) How Evangelists Used Their Sources

Redaction critics try are convinced that the evangelists not only cut and pasted their sources together but used them creatively. Perrin tells us that the starting point for redaction criticism is a debate about the Marcan hypothesis. It is not about the fact that it is the earliest of the Gospels, but about the assumption that, as the earliest, it is reliable historical source.[11] Since redaction criticism is primarily interested in investigating how authors used their sources and their unique theological contribution to their sources, it is not surprising that most redaction critical studies of the New Testament texts have involved the Gospels. Whereas at times sources can be discerned in the New Testament Epistles (e.g., Col 1:15–20; Phil 2:6–11; Rom 1:3–4, etc.) or Acts (e.g., the "we sections"), the clearest use of sources is found in the gospels and in particular in the Synoptic Gospels. It is understandable, therefore, that the majority of redaction critical investigations have involved the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.[12]

Most redaction critics assume in their investigation of the Synoptic Gospels that Matthew and Luke in composing their Gospels used both Mark (or something very much like our present Mark) and a common source or sources which can be designated as Q. The results of most such investigations have tended to support this "solution" of the Synoptic Problem.[13]

Assuming the use of "Mark" by the other two Evangelists, the simplest way of proceeding in the investigation of a Matthean or Lukan redaction criticism is to investigate how they used their source, Mark. Here a synopsis of the gospels is most helpful. By a careful comparison of the additions, the modifications, and the omissions of their Markan source we can detect the theological interests and concerns of Matthew and Luke. Besides investigating the material in the triple tradition, we can also investigate the common material of Matthew and Luke that is not found in Mark and observe the differences we find in the double tradition. By the use of literary and form criticism, we can often determine which of the two traditions is more primitive, i.e., more original, and thus ascertain how the other Evangelist has used the tradition and what this reveals concerning the particular theological emphasis which he seeks to make.[14]

This is more difficult, but it is not impossible. With regard to Mark, it would appear that the best areas of investigation for perceiving his redactional emphases are the seams (the "cement" Mark uses to join together different traditions), the explanatory and theological insertions found at various times in the texts (these are often introduced by a gar "for"), the summaries (these are not simply traditions which Mark used but summaries he constructed using various traditional materials), various modifications of individual pericopes and sayings, the selection of the material included, the arrangement of the material, the introduction and the typical vocabulary of the Evangelist.[15]

2) Editing

There are many signs of editing in the Gospels. In such editorial process the collectors (the Evangelists) have sometimes added intensification and explanations. While they are not frequent in Mark, Matthew and Luke have more such editorial expressions.[16] This shows that the Evangelists not only collected and presented the materials that are in their hands as they are, but they had their own theology and do editing/ redaction.

3) Insertions

Bultmann suggested that there were many insertions of then speech materials into the narratives which were done in different ways. The apopthegems (sayings) were ideally suited to take their place in a narrative presentation of the ministry of Jesus once the need has been felt to preserve them. Bultmann said that Matthew has frequently done this by inserting the speech materials into situations he found in Mark etc.[17]

According to Perrin, the prime requisite for redaction criticism is the ability to trace the form and content of material used by the author concerned or in someway to determine the nature and extent of his activity in collecting and creating, as well as in arranging, editing and composing.[18]

Endnotes

1 Norman Perrin, *What Is Redaction Criticism?* (London: SPCK, 1970), 1.

2 Robert H. Stein, "Redaction Criticism," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, [1992], 1997).

3 Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?* 1.

4 Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, translated by Bertram Lee Woolf (New York: Scribner's, n.d.), 3 as quoted by Stein, *Synoptic Problem*, 231.

5 Stein, *Synoptic Problem*, 232.

6 Perrin, 13.Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?*13.

7 Stein, *Synoptic Problem*, 233.

8 Stein, *Synoptic Problem*, 233.

9 Stein, "Redaction Criticism," *ABD*.

10 Stein, "Redaction Criticism," *ABD*.

11 Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?* 7.

12 Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?*

13 Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?*

14 Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?*

15 Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?* 2.

16 Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 326, 327. He choked out certain examples for this. Among them, Mt 21:33. In the allegory of the wicked husbandmen, Matthew has followed Mark's example and inserted avkou,sate to make it smooth. Likewise, Luke also furnished the speech material with emphases and explanations. In the metaphor of the kingdom divided against itself, he added in 11:18b: ὅτι λέγετε ἐν Βεελζεβοὺλ ἐκβάλλειν με τὰ δαιμόνια

17 Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 329, 333. Bultmann believed that Mark added to apopthegems that plainly belong to the tradition as well that can be seen in Mk 2:21f (metaphor of cloth and wine) to 2:19 (fasting); 2:27f (the Sabbath) to 2:23-26 (plucking corn) etc. Bultmann continued that

in Mt 24:1, (from Mk 13:1) Matthew makes all the disciples ask the question instead of one only and in Mt 15:15 (from Mk 7:17) Matthew used Peter instead of the μαθηταίetc.

[18] Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?* 2.

CHAPTER 6

Form Criticism (Formgeschiste)

In NT studies, *Form Criticism* may be defined as "a systematic, scientific, historical, and theological methodology for analyzing the forms, and to some extent the content, of the primitive Christian literature, with special reference to the history of the early Christian movement in its reflective and creative theological activities."[1]

Form criticism is an attempt to analyse the origin and history of the pre-literary, oral tradition behind our written Gospels. Though the best or most complete definitions are offered by scholars, yet the easiest and simplest definition of it may be this: "Form criticism is the study of oral tradition of the scripture." This may be incomplete, but it says clearly that it is the study of the Bible in its pre-literary form.

Pioneers of form criticism: Martin Dibelius, K. L. Schmidt and Rudolf Bultmann.

Necessity of Form Criticism

There are some scholars who believe that the Gospels in their present form are neither the records of a historical Jesus, nor the products of contemporary reporters who wrote down what they saw Jesus do and heard Him saying. They are the products of the believing Christian church of a generation later, and they reflected the life and faith of that community rather than the actual situation of Jesus' life. The life setting (*Sitz im Leben*) of the Gospel traditions as we have them is the Christian church of 60-90 CE. The Gospels are not neutral, impartial, objective reports of disinterested, uncommitted observers, but are the products of Christian believers and reflect their faith.[2] This implicitly means that the Gospel materials we have now are distorted messages of the original incidents or sayings.

Nature of Form Criticism

It is a general understanding that before the Gospels were written there was a period of oral tradition.[3] The Gospel was preserved for a generation in oral form which was handed down from generation to generation.[4] During that oral period, the narratives and sayings, with the exception of the passion narrative, were circulated mainly as single and self-contained detached units, each in itself.[5] The early form critics argued that the oral tradition was circulated as individual units of tradition. This simply means that certain incident such as miracle incident was circulated as an individual unit. One story was told as a single unit. Likewise, there were several small units that are circulated by word. The Evangelists simply supplied the string that tied these units together. Therefore, they were just like "collectors" of materials who used "scissow and paste" to bring these isolated traditions together and produced "pericope collections" (rather than Gospels).[6]

From the words of the form critics, we are informed now that before we have the written scripture, those different types of literature were circulated as different form or types, each in single and isolated units. Those different units were collected and put together by the evangelists, and finally the finished product, the Gospel came into our hand. If this is right, then the evangelists are no theologians or writers at all, but collectors or compilers or editors.

Sitz Im Leben

The term 'Sitz im Leben' was used by German OT scholar, Hermann Gunkel in 1917.[7] It simply means 'situation in life'. Gunkel maintained that form/genre and content are so related. If one can determine which forms and which content were originally associated, one can formulate a history of religion. This is possible because each particular form-content genre had a unique locus (Sitz-im-Leben) in the history of the religion and because the Gattungen (genre) were preserved by tradition.[8] Gunkel, though he applied in the Old Testament, mostly in Genesis and Hebrew Psalms,[9] Sitz im Leben is applied in the New Testament. Form criticism carefully looks into the different life settings, Sitz Im Leben, which is classified into three settings:

1) Sitz im Leben Jesu (the situation of the life of Christ)

It refers to the context and meaning of an individual story or saying in the earthly life of Jesus whenever such a context is recoverable. It is argued by scholars that to discover the earliest meaning of the text, for instance the parable of Jesus, investigation should be anchored in the Sitz im

Leben Jesu.[10] Thus, form critics take up this and try to discover the truest information by going into the earliest materials that are in oral form.

2) Sitz im leben der Kirche (the situation in the life of the church)

It refers to the situation or context of particular story or saying of Jesus in the life of the early church. What promoted the early community to preserve this particular incident form the life of Jesus and what meaning the community gave to it. It is the cult, the preaching, the propaganda, the catechism, the apologetic of the primitive Church (or — for the OT — the cultic and religious life of Israel).[11] This situation is the most important for the form critics. They say that whatever is preserved went through the early church community and shaped by the church. Therefore, need is felt to go beyond the setting of the church.

3) Sitz im Evangelium (the situation in the Gospel)

It refers to the context or saying or story of Jesus in the Gospel itself-what did the evangelist mean to teach by recording this particular event in the particular setting. This is taken importantly by the redaction critics.

Classification of Forms

Within the Gospels we find different and often diverse kinds of material. These materials can be classified according to their form/type. Various attempts have been made to classify them. Among them the most notable classifications are those of Martin Dibelius, Bultmann and Vincent Taylor. These form critics did their best to classify and analyze the Gospel materials so as to go beyond the literary period and find the truth in the Gospels.

Debelius[12]

1) Synoptics were not literary works for common use. They were used by preachers, teachers and narrators.

2) That the synoptic evangelists were not true authors but compilers of pre-existing materials.

Dibelius' Categorization

1) **Paradigms** (illustrations in the early Christian preaching): they were short narratives ended with a saying. The purpose was to bring out the importance of the sayings (example: Jesus' healing of the paralytic).

2) **Novellen/tales**: the miracle stories, where the aim is to show Jesus as a wonder worker. No sayings attached (example: cleansing the lepers/stilling of the storm by Jesus).

3) **Sayings**: they were unattached to any narratives. They were collected for the purpose of catechesis.

4) **Legends**: extraordinary things about holy people (example: the infancy stories).

5) **Myths**: interaction between mythological persons (baptism, temptation and transformation/transfiguration of Jesus).

6) **Passion story**: Jesus' death, burial and resurrection.

Rudolf Bultmann

Bultmann made sharp distinction between historical Jesus and the Christ of faith. To him, those who have encountered the Christ of faith no longer looked at Jesus of history. The evangelists who wrote the Gospels were also affected by this and must have written their gospels form the stand point of faith. Gospel became early Christian theology rather than historical data for the life of Jesus.

His Categorisation[13]

1) **Apophthegms**: same with Debelius' paradigms (produced by the community while to Dibelius, they were loyal interpretation of the teaching of Jesus)

2) **Miracle stories**: same with Dibelius' Novellen.

3) **Legend**: he also included the 'myth' here.

4) **Sayings of Jesus**: He divided the sayings into 5 groups

a) Wisdom sayings

b) 'I' sayings

c) Prophetic and apocalyptic sayings

d) Sayings regarding different laws and rules

e) Parables

Vincent Taylor

In his book *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition* (1933) adapted usual terminology:[14]

1) Pronouncement story. This is the same with Bultmann's apophthegms (*Apophthegmata*) and Dibelius' paradigms.

2) Stories about Jesus. This is same with other critics' legends or myths.

3) In addition, he discussed passion narratives, sayings, parables, and miracle stories.

These are different forms which the critics can find out in the Gospels. It is almost always argued that the evangelists collected these circulated materials and sewed together to form a Gospel.

Endnotes

1 Vernon K. Robbins, “Form Criticism,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, [1992], 1997).

2 Robbins, “Form Criticism,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 145.

3 E. Basil Redlich, *Form Criticism* (London: Duckworth, 1939), 34 cited by Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*), 163.

4 George Eldon Ladd, *The New Testament and Criticism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), 148f. He pointed out Luke’s prologue and the meaning of *euangelion* as ‘good news’ that connotes ‘message,’ an oral preaching.

5 Redlich, *Form Criticism*, 37 as cited by Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 165.

6 Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 165. K. L. Schmidt argued that when one looks carefully at the “seams” of Mark, i.e., the verses that connect the various pericopes together, they are often very general and rather vague. One of the good examples is on St. Mark. If we read through the Gospel of Mark and observe the introductory verse of each new pericope to see if there is a necessary connection with what precedes. See Mk 7:1, “Now when the Pharisees gathered together to him, with some of the scribes, who had come from Jerusalem, they saw…”

7 Leonard J. Coppes, “An Introduction to the Hermeneutic of Hermann Gunkel” *Westminster Theological Journal* 32, no. 2 (May, 1970): 149.

8 Coppes: 160.

9 Kenton L. Sparks, “Form Criticism,” in *Dictionary of Biblical Criticism and Interpretation*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (New York: Routledge, 2007), 112.

10 Grant R. Osborne, “History and Theology in the Synoptic Gospels,” *Trinity Journal* 24, no. 1 (2003): 20.

11 Krister Stendahl, “Implications of Form-Criticism and Tradition-Criticism for Biblical Interpretation,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 77, no. 1 (1958): 34.

12 Vernon K. Robbins, “Form Criticism,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, [1992], 1997).

13 Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans., John Marsh (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972), 63-167.

14 Vincent Taylor, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition* (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1933), 63f.

CHAPTER 8

Narrative Criticism

Introduction

During the 1970s scholars of the Bible created this new method of biblical criticism. Narrative critics analyze the complex ways in which stories are told in biblical books written in narrative form. Their method concentrates on the plot, points of view, character development, dialogue, settings, repetitions, gaps in the story line, uses of irony and the effects on readers of these and other literary features that distinguish a particular biblical text from a letter, treatise, speech or collection of unrelated stories.[1]

The Development of This Method

1) Origins

Biblical scholars invented the phrase “narrative criticism” to parallel the established designations of text, source, form, redaction and composition criticism. This new approach to understanding biblical texts was rooted in composition criticism, which developed into a hybrid method in which at least three such theories for analyzing the final form of the text have been integrated:

a) As communication between an author and reader through a set of intermediate voices;

b) As the presentation of an autonomous story world whose basic elements are characters, plot and settings; and

c) As the combination of rhetorical techniques that the author chose in order to transmit the story in just the way it is.

This newly synthesized method was nurtured by members of the Markan Seminar of the Society of Biblical Literature. The initial focus on Mark’s Gospel, made widely known by D. Rhoads and D. Michie, was followed

in the 1980s by major narrative studies of Matthew by J. D. Kingsbury, of John by R. A. Culpepper and of Luke-Acts by R. C. Tannehill, each of whom drew on general literary theories in his own way.

2) Assumptions

While those scholars who practice narrative criticism have demonstrated various ways of applying this method, they share at least three basic assumptions:

a) Biblical narrative texts are to be analyzed in their finished, canonical forms, not as composites of various sources.

b) Biblical narratives are to be read with the goal of grasping and entering the story world created by the text and not first of all for reconstructing their historical context or their relation to reality outside of the world presented in the text.

c) Biblical narratives display significant literary artistry that can be appreciated by close attention to the way the narrator tells these stories: that is, to how characters are presented; to how the plot is developed (including creation and resolution of conflicts); to foreshadowing; to gaps in the story line; to repetition of words, scenes, themes and literary patterns; to points of view; to temporal, spatial and social settings; to relative duration of focus on each scene; to uses of implicit commentary (such as irony, misunderstandings and symbolism); and to other rhetorical strategies for persuading readers to enter the world and agree with the story created by the narrator.[2]

The Applications of Narrative Criticism

1) The Communication Model

This model tends to say that the real author communicates with the real reader (the one reading the text today) through the creation of an implied author who advances the story by speaking through a narrator, who may or may not be the voice of one of the characters. The narratee is the person or persons directly addressed by the narrator. And the implied reader is the real reader's image of the original reader who is presupposed by or produced by the text.

Since the real author stands outside the text as such, the only author available to the real reader is the implied author. Such example of narrator can be found in the famous "we" narrator of Acts (who first appears in Acts 16:10–17 and then in Acts 20:5–15; 21:1–18; 27:1–28:16) and the narrator of the Revelation to John.106 Here, the narrator seems to the invisible speaker whose voice may be most obvious in

editorial comments. The writer of the words of the narrator is called the implied author. The narratee is the literary figure to whom the author explicitly directs the text, such as Theophilus in Luke 1:3 and Acts 1:1. But the real reader is the one who reads today. The goal of narrative criticism is to enable a real reader to read the text from the perspective of the implied reader.

2) The Narrative Analysis of the Text

Plotting, Gaps and Repetitions: Narrative critics seek to explain the characteristics of narrative that distinguish it from a recorded series of isolated incidents. The primary feature that they analyze is the text's plot, an interrelated succession of actions ordered to present a beginning, a middle and an end. An author has a large range of freedom regarding where to begin (compare the openings of Mark and Luke) as well as how to end (compare the endings of Matthew and Luke). And for the middle an author can choose, for example, to follow one or another character, to include or omit events (compare the middle sections of Mark and Luke), to flash back (note Luke's placement of Jesus' genealogy), to foreshadow (note how Simeon's prophecies in Luke 2:29–35 anticipate the main plot turn of Acts) or to proceed in chronological order.

There is a wide gap at the end of Luke and Acts. Mikeal C. Parsons has used narrative criticism to illuminate the ways in which the end of Luke and the beginning of Acts both overlap and conflict with each other. And the open-ended character of Acts provokes the reader both to wonder about what happened to Paul after "two whole years" under house arrest and to remain uncertain about the implied author's anticipation regarding further reception of "this salvation of God" by Jews.

While historical critics have usually regarded both gaps in the plot line and repetitions as evidence for an author's use of multiple sources, narrative critics observe that these features appear frequently in narratives and that they can be effective literary devices for communicating the author's message. Perhaps the most striking example of repetition in early Christian documents is the thrice-told story of Saul/Paul's conversion/call in Acts 9, 22 and 26. The reader first hears the story from the authoritative, third-person point of view of the narrator in Acts 9. In Acts 22 Paul uses insider language (Aramaic) to tell an expanded version of the story of his dramatic conversion in the form of a defense to a Judean audience in Jerusalem. In the third account, Paul now speaking Greek, is a hearing before civil authorities in Caesarea.

Such modified repetitions led narrative critics to two important conclusions:

1) The reader should pay close attention to how the placement of any element in a developing narrative affects that material's function. Expectations created or implied early in a narrative may be reversed later. Thus it is not appropriate to derive a biblical writer's view of a particular subject by collecting and summarizing relevant internal references without regard to their functions in the whole narrative.
2) The reader is led to build an image of the central characters as relevant information is revealed in an unfolding narrative.

Endnotes

[1] S. S. Bartchy, "Narrative Criticism," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998).

[2] Bartchy, "Narrative Criticism," *Dictionary of the Later New Testament.*

CHAPTER 9

Rhetorical Criticism

The origin of rhetorical criticism can be traced to a lecture by James Muilenberg (1968) calling for an approach which would go beyond form criticism. In NT studies, Hans Dieter Betz's work on Galatians launched this new era, followed by the highly influential work of George Alexander Kennedy, New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism. Rather than restricting research to the small units of tradition (as in form criticism), rhetorical criticism looks at the work as a whole, the final literary product.

Rhetorical criticism is concerned (as is redaction criticism) with the personal aspects of the author's thought. Moreover, rhetorical criticism is concerned with the context, including those concepts which writer and reader share. Thus, it is interested in the social and cultural relationship between author and reader. The rhetorical techniques and arrangements are analyzed in terms of their function in the author's argument.[1]

Rhetorical criticism is a synchronic study of literary texts and their strategies of communication and persuasion. It concentrates on the given text without investigating into its sources, historical origins and transmission, or authorship. It considers the text's language as a social reality by which the author communicates and influences others. It also aims to establish the context of the work.[2]

Characteristics of Rhetorical Criticism

The first step involves a process namely identifying the rhetorical unit or delimiting the unit for study. A rhetorical unit is a persuasive or convincing unit and has a beginning, a middle and an end. Rhetorical units can be larger or smaller. The smallest rhetorical units include parables and metaphors, simple sayings, blessings, hymns and brief commandments.

The next size grouping are combinations of smaller units, such as (from the NT) the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7), the 'Little Apocalypse' (Mk. 13), and Paul's 'Fool's Speech' (2 Cor. 11).

Finally, there is the largest rhetorical unit, the text as a whole, both a given document or a collection of documents, such as the letters of Paul or the whole NT canon.[3]

The second step is to define the situation of the unit. The rhetorical situation to be the 'specific condition or situation which invites utterance.' It may include people, events, objects and the interrelationships they all have. We can regard the audience as very important to the nature of the speech delivered because the way of speech should rightly be used according to the age groups, economic, social and political etc. background. The shaping of the discourse will clearly be influenced by the response that is being received from the audience.

Rhetorical criticism is a holistic approach to texts. It treats the form of the text as we have it as its subject, rather than some reconstructed earlier form of the text or part of the text. Thus, even when a part of a Pauline letter is analyzed the concerns are not so much archeological, focusing on the pre-history of the text and how it got into its present form, but rather teleological, focusing on the communicative and persuasive power of the text as we have it towards its end, and the contribution which the particular section being considered makes to that power.

It focuses on argumentation and persuasion. It works with the assumption that the reason for speaking or writing is to persuade. This can be persuasion to continue in a particular direction, to alter the direction, or to remain static: persuasion takes many forms. According to this understanding, although we do not say that Paul (for example) had a formal rhetorical training, but simply that the world in which he lived was so much influenced by rhetoric that it would be inescapable for him.

It also treats the author's perspective as important, for it seeks the persuasive effect that the author was trying to achieve. Rhetorical criticism seeks to understand and interpret the author's mind as accurately as possible.

Endnotes

1 William Baird, "Biblical Criticism," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992).

2 Benjamin Fiore, "Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism: Nt Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism," ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992).

3 Cf. Steve Walton, "What Has Aristotle to Do with Paul? Rhetorical Criticism and 1 Thessalonians," *Tyndale Bulletin* 46, no. 2 (1995): 229-250.

CHAPTER 10

Socio-Scientific Criticism

Introduction

Since the latter part the 20th century, scholars discovered the inadequacy of the understanding of the New Testament on theological ground alone. They came to realize that the social setting of the New Testament and the early Christianity are indispensable sources for proper interpretation. They tried to clarify the social situation of the original readers of the New Testament writings by analyzing the different groups within which the church emerged. In short, they study the social dimension of the early Christianity for New Testament criticism.

This sociological analysis for NT studies is called social criticism or social-scientific criticism. The most prominent social critics are E. A. Judge, Derek Tidball, Gerd Theissen, John Gager, Wayne Meeks, Abraham Malherbe, Eisentadt, Lenski, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, John Elliott, Bruce Malina, Jerome Neyrey, and John Pilch etc.

General Definition

Social-scientific criticism has been broadly defined as that phase of the exegetical task which analyzes the social and cultural dimensions of the text and of its environmental context through the utilization of the perspectives, theory, models, and research of the social sciences.

Two Chief Focuses

1) Socio-Cultural Anthropology

The first focuses on the “social and cultural conditions, features, and contours of early Christianity and its social environment.” Here we find descriptions of geography, economic life, religious practices, daily life, the political scene.[1] Some of the leading sociological or anthropological scholars are John J. Pilch, Bruce J. Malina, Jerome Neyrey etc.

2) Social-Scientific Exegesis

A second emphasis focuses more specifically on the exegesis of biblical

texts. According to J. H. Elliot, the objective of sociological exegesis is the determination of the social as well as the literary and theological conditions, content and intended consequences of our text; that is, the determination of the sum of its features which make it a vehicle of social interaction and an instrument of social as well as literary and theological consequence.[2]

The approach is exegetical in that its focus is still on determining the meaning of the biblical documents, and it does not neglect other operations of the exegetical enterprise such as textual, literary, narrative, historical, tradition, form, redaction, rhetorical, and theological (ideological) criticisms. The approach is also sociological in that it exercises the presuppositions, theories, analytical methods, and comparative models of the discipline of sociology.[3]

Principles of Social Criticism

Robert Mulholland proposes five general principles of social criticism in the New Testament interpretation:[4]

1) The preliminary level is the study of the social setting of the New Testament. This level is almost entirely descriptive, defining from textual, archaeological, political, economic, cultural, religious, social, educational and communal structure of the New Testament period.
2) The second one is more analytical than the first. It is the description of the sociological dynamics of the New Testament world, understanding the interaction between the various social structures. Every minute thing must be taken care that any compact and well framed concluded materials that discard the social realities should be taken note because balance and imbalance, growth and decline, old established structures and new emergent structures can and often do exist in the sociological atmosphere.
3) The third principle is both descriptive and analytical. It analyzes the ways in which groups and individuals exist and function within the complex sociological context of their world. It deals with the relationship between individuals, the relationships between individuals and groups, the relationships between groups, the structures of groups and the social stratification of the culture.
4) This process grasps the sociological matrix of the New Testament world and the dynamic Christian movement. The text of the New Testament is studied within the sociological context of Christian communities in the Roman world of the first century.
5) In this step, the interpreter should draw out the situation of life of the text and its community of faith and should bring out the meaning of the text accordingly.

The contribution of the Social Scientific Criticism in Writing the New Testament

Some of the contributions of social scientific criticism are:

1) It can describe the social facts of early Christianity and place it in its social context.
2) It can construct a social history of Christianity.
3) It can examine the social forces which led to Christianity and the social institutions which resulted from its foundation.
4) It can investigate the creation of the Christian world view, its social construction of reality and the structures which maintained that world view as plausible.[5]
5) Derek Tidball supports that sociology can make our understanding of the New Testament correct.[6]
6) It also helps us to understand the growth and development of Christianity as a social movement bearing in mind as we do so the types of authority it demonstrated.

Endnotes

1 For detail, see James D. Dvorak, “John H. Elliott’s Social-Scientific Criticism,” *Trinity Journal* 28, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 254.
2 John H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 7f.
3 Dvorak: 256.
4 Jr. M. Robert Mulholland, “Social Criticism,” in *New Testament Criticism & Interpretation*, ed. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 304f.
5 Derek Tidball, *An Introduction to the Sociology of the New Testament* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1983), 14.
6 Tidball, *An Introduction to the Sociology of the New Testament*,

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3 Dvorak: 256.
4 Jr. M. Robert Mulholland, “Social Criticism,” in *New Testament Criticism & Interpretation*, ed. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 304f.
5 Derek Tidball, *An Introduction to the Sociology of the New Testament* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1983), 14.
6 Tidball, *An Introduction to the Sociology of the New Testament*,

CHAPTER 11

The Theology of the Synoptic Gospels[1]

MARK

1) Eschatology

Mark's community sees eschatology as the "time between" Jesus' inauguration of the Kingdom and its future consummation as promised. So, the Gospel reminds the readers that a "radical obedience to Jesus' call and selfless service to others" acts as the sign of" the present Kingdom. For Mark the "gospel" clearly depicts Jesus as inaugurating God's sovereign rule, the Kingdom, through his words and deeds.

2) Kingdom of God

Although Mark refers to the term Kingdom of God fifteen times only, yet it can be said that he summarizes Jesus' message in terms of the kingdom of God. Markan Kingdom of God concept can be described as under:

a) Kingdom as Future Expectation

In the discussion with the disciples following the story of the rich man, Jesus refers to the kingdom as something one will enter (10:23-25; so 9:47 and 10:15). This future expectation correlates with the references to the coming of the Son of man in judgment. The kingdom in Mark, therefore, maintains a distinctive future significance as the time of judgment and consummation.

b) Kingdom as Present Reality

At the same time, the possibility of a present reality of God's kingdom appears in the saying about receiving "the kingdom of God as a child" (10: 14-15). C. H. Dodd said that Jesus preached only a present kingdom and the supposed references to a future kingdom must be understood in an already realized sense (hence realized eschatology). However,

one has to know that to "receive the kingdom of God as a child" in the present does not weaken the meaning or the expectation of the kingdom of God in the future, nor does the anticipation of the future kingdom of God rule out an experience or reception of the kingdom of God in the present.

c) The Inauguration of God's Sovereign Reign

This dual dimension of the kingdom present and yet future is seen in Jesus' proclamation of the "gospel of God" in 1:15: "The appointed time has been fulfilled, the kingdom of God has come, repent and believe the gospel." The Greek verb (*enggiken*) describing the "presence" of the kingdom usually denotes nearness rather than presence. In other words, "the kingdom of God has come near. As a result, some scholars interpreted that the kingdom of God has come into history, "the appointed time has been fulfilled," even though the full appearance is yet to come ("near"). Both present and future dimensions are important for Mark. For Mark, therefore, Jesus' ministry has to do with the inauguration of God's sovereign, redemptive rule, the kingdom of God, in history.

3. Christology

a) Messiah

In Mark, Jesus as God's Anointed One, the Messiah, is confirmed at various places:

i) It was confirmed at the baptism, the first appearance of Jesus in the story (1:11-15). The voice from heaven at the baptism (1:11) calls Jesus "my son," an echo of Psalm 2:7. Since this Psalm most likely was a royal Psalm used at the coronation of the king in Israel, the royal connotation of Jesus as the anointed king, the Messiah, would naturally follow.

ii) When Jesus asks the disciples who they say he is, Peter responds correctly, "You are the Messiah" (8:29). This is clearly seen in 14:62. Jesus did not deny this affirmation but commanded his disciples not to reveal to anyone until the time has come.

iii) After the arrest and during the trial by the Sanhedrin, the high priest asked Jesus about his identity in terms of "the Messiah, Son of the Blessed" (14:61). Jesus answered affirmatively: "I am" (14:62). Bultmann said that although Jesus functioned as the Messiah, but his Messiahship remained hidden until the resurrection.

b) Son of God

Jesus as the Son of God is again clearly presented in various ways at

various places:

i) Jesus is also seen as "the Son of God" in Mark. In fact some interpreters would say that "Son of God" is Mark's particular designation for Jesus. Though omitted by some early Greek manuscripts, the opening verse of Mark, "Jesus Messiah, Son of God" (l:1) represents Mark's theology attributing Jesus as the Son of God.

ii) Jesus' sonship is seen again in the confession of Roman centurion at the cross (15:39) that Jesus is the Son of God.

iii) Jesus is again presented as the Son of God in the exorcism and the related narratives.

iv) In the high priest' question, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed?" (14:61)-the two designations of "Messiah" and "Son of God" explicitly come together again. "Son of the Blessed" represents a Jewish indirect way of expression (circumlocution) for "Son of God.

v) In contrast to the Jewish religious authorities who stood at the cross mocking Jesus as the "Messiah, king of Israel" (15:32), the Roman centurion publicly declares, "Truly, this man was God's Son!" (15:39).

c) Son of Man

The designation of Jesus as the Son of Man appears only twice in the first half of the Gospel (2:10-28), and the expression appears thirteen times from 8:31-14:62. "Son of Man" is used exclusively by Jesus and always with reference to himself in Mark's narrative. Mark mostly uses it to denote Jesus' authority. The "Son of man" also stands as direct references to his coming of death, authoritative earthly ministry, and his coming role as a judge at the consummation. For Mark "Son of man" carries Christological overtones.

d) The Messianic Secret

The term Messianic Secret is derived from W. Wrede's significant work The Messianic Secret (Das Messiasgehaimnis in den Evangelien, 1901). Wrede argued that the theme of secrecy in Mark is all-pervasive. Wrede referred to a number of features in the gospel as evidence for this theme of secrecy:

(1) Jesus explicitly commands the demons to be silent about his identity after exorcisms (1:25, 34; 3:11-12);

(2) Jesus gives orders that his miracles are not to be publicized (1:43-44; 5:43; 7:36);

(3) Jesus commands the disciples to be quiet about him (8:30; 9:9);

(4) Jesus tries to keep his whereabouts a secret (7:24; 9:30);

(5) Jesus gives private instruction only to a chosen few (7:17; 10:10);

(6) In Mark, Jesus teaches in parables in order deliberately to hide his intent from the crowds; and

(7) Despite their privileged position, the disciples in Mark regularly fail to understand Jesus (6:52; 8:17-21).

MATTHEW

1) Son of God

It is assumed that the key Christological title in Matthew is the "Son of God." The importance of this title can be seen not only where it is used (e.g., 8:29; 14:33; 16: 16; cf 3:17 and 17:5) but also in places where it is implied, such as in 1:23, "… and they shall name him Emmanuel, 'which means 'God is with us'. Matthew also stresses the sonship of Jesus by having him refer to God as his Father some twenty-three times, fifteen of which are unique to Matthew.

2) The Son of Man

The second major title, the Son of Man, is regularly used by Jesus and thus servers as the public counterpart to the confessional title. In reference to the parousia and eschatological judgment, it tends to coincide with Son of God. Some scholars find no material difference between the titles and give equal importance of the two titles.

3) The Kingdom of Heaven

Among the NT writers Matthew alone uses "kingdom of heaven," in which "heaven" means a respectful Semitic indirect way of presenting (circumlocution) God. Matthew uses "kingdom of heaven" 32 times and "kingdom of God" 4 times (12:28; 19:24; 21:31, 43). The fact that the two forms can be used interchangeably even in a single pericope (19:23–24) shows there is no real difference in meaning. The better translation for this phrase is 'the rule/reign of God'. It is not to be understood in terms of geographical territory on the earth. It is also not church as some people suggest it.

The theme of the kingdom of heaven mediates between Christ and church. "Kingdom" becomes a process concept in Matthew. The kingdom existed already in the OT, for in some sense Israel possessed it (21:33–46, especially v 43). But the birth of Jesus naturally entails a new presence of the kingdom. Yet both the Baptist and Jesus begin their ministries by proclaiming that the kingdom is drawing near (3:2; 4:17).

The kingdom has already come in the exorcisms of Jesus (12:28); nevertheless, Jesus teaches his disciples to pray for its final coming (6:10) and to seek it (6:33). The events of death-resurrection mean a new stage in the coming of the kingdom, since for the first time Jesus is exalted to total power over the cosmos (28:16–20). He rules now as Son of Man in his kingdom (13:37–38, 41); but his visible coming as judge on the last day will mean the final and ultimate coming of his kingdom (16:27–28).

The kingdom of heaven thus embraces the whole salvation history, as God's rule progressively breaks into and triumphs over the sinful human world. From its all-inclusive sweep, it is clear that the kingdom of heaven is not enclosed within the boundary of the church. The Church is the locus and instrument of the kingdom where Jesus is consciously confessed, worshipped, and obeyed. Making disciples of all the nations is the path the Church takes as it journeys through history toward the consummation of the kingdom of heaven or God.

4) Church

Among the evangelists Matthew alone uses the word "church" in his gospel. Although it occurs only three times (16:18; 18:17 [twice]), the whole of Jesus' public ministry aims at gathering disciples into the embryonic church that is then led up to Jerusalem for the death and resurrection, which makes possible the full founding of the Church in the last part of the gospel. At the death-resurrection, Israel disowns its Messiah (27:25) and the kingdom is transferred from Israel to the Church (21:43). Because of this note of break, Matthew never calls the Church the new or true Israel; it is rather "another people," the Church of Jesus. Matthew gives no detailed description of church order and leaders. Christian prophets, just men (10:40–41), wise men, and scribes (13:52; 23:34) are all mentioned, with no indication of how they are ordered or whether they overlap. Matthew can appropriately be called an "ecclesiastical" Gospel for other reasons as well.

5) Salvation History

Matthew's presentation of the coming of the kingdom of Heaven/God is interpreted as salvation process or history, and it can be divided into three major periods: Law and prophets, earthly Jesus, and the Church.

i) The first of all the period, the Law and the prophets, pointed forward to and prophesied the time of Jesus (11:13).

ii) The fact that all the formula quotations refer to and are fulfilled in the life and death of Jesus indicates that his earthly life is the second period, the midpoint of salvation history.

iii) In the third period, that is the time of the Church, no formula quotation is applied. The distinction between the time of Jesus and the time of the Church, the third period, is reinforced by the different rules for mission. During his public ministry, Jesus was sent only to the land and people of Israel (15:24) and enjoined his twelve disciples to observe the same restriction (10:5–6). After the death-resurrection, the exalted Jesus commands the same group to undertake a mission to all nations (28:16–20) until the Parousia (v 20).

LUKE

1) Universalism

Among all other Gospels, the Gospel According to Luke is regarded as the most universal in its nature and messages. This can be vividly seen from the following points:

i) The angel's goodwill message is directed to all human beings (2:14).

ii) Simeon's foretelling about Jesus that he is to be a Light to the Gentile 2:32).

iii) The Samaritans are placed on a level with the Jews (9:54; 10:33; 17: 16).

iv) The great banquet signifies wider participants because servants were sent into the roads and country lanes which Matthew has depicted as highways.

iv) The Great Commission is directed to all nations (24:47).

2) World Affirmation

Luke-Acts has a positive view of the world. It is perhaps the least apocalyptic of the New Testament writings. Not only is Luke relatively unconcerned about the end time, but his historical enterprise bestows value on time itself. Luke approves as well those outside the Christian movement. Outsiders are generally regarded as reasonable and open-minded. The empire is not the instrument of Satan, but the provision for the safety and spread of the gospel itself. Luke-Acts recounts the conversion of gentiles and entirely lacks Matthew's xenophobia (fear of foreigner): gentiles can be "God-fearers," and even the unconverted show kindness and intelligence (Acts 28:7–10). The apostles appear as self-controlled, courageous, just, law-abiding, reasonable men, the farthest thing from fanatics.

3) Sociological Interest

Luke concerned more on-the socially ostracized than the other Gospels. The then socially oppressed such as shepherd (Lk. 2:8-20), women (23:49, 55-24:11), the widow (of Nain), the immoral woman (7:36ff), tax collectors (Zacchaeus 19:8fi), the repentance of the robber (29:39ff) the prodigal son (Lk 15), tshe Samaritans who were nationally ostracized by the Jews are given good concern by Luke.

4) Salvation

Human values are reversed by God not for the destruction of the wicked but for the saving of the lost. God's "visitation" is for their salvation (cf. Acts 7:25). Luke emphasizes the salvific aspect of the Good News more than any of the other gospels, first of all in the way he shapes the image of Jesus. The Prophet is also Savior (Luke 2:11), who brings salvation (1:69; 19:9) and works saving acts (7:50; 8:36; 8:50). He has "come to save the lost" (19:10). What is said of Jesus in the gospel applies to the apostles' mission in Acts as well. The message of God delivered by these prophets is above all one of salvation (Acts 15:11; 28:28). The theme of salvation is dominant in distinctively Lukan parables, above all in the parables of the lost sheep (15:3–7), the lost coin (15:8–10), and the lost son (15:11–32).

5) The Response of Faith

God's restored people answer his visitation with "fruits worthy of repentance" (Luke 3:8; Acts 26:20). In the first place is faith. God requires faithfulness in return for his fidelity. In Luke-Acts, faith combines obedient hearing of the word and patient endurance. It is not a momentary decision, but a response which grows and matures (Luke 8:15; 17:5–6). Essential to the response of faith is prayer. Jesus prays throughout his ministry (3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:28– 29; 11:1; 22:41–44) and teaches his disciples to pray (11:2–4; 18:1; 22:46). Conversion demands that humans change their behavior in imitation of God. As God welcomes all into his people, so are Christians expected to show hospitality.

6) Luke's Concern for the Poor

Many of Luke's special parables relate to money matters, e.g. the rich fool, the tower builder, the lost-coin, the unjust steward, the rich man and Lazarus. Those who are poor and humble are often the objects of the Saviour's mercy (6:20, 30). Pharisees are ca1led lovers of money (16: 14). At Nazareth, Jesus proclaimed good tidings to the poor (4:17-21). In the Magnificat, the hungry are filled and the rich are sent away

(1:53). In the Sermon on the Plain the first woe is directed against the rich, who are said to have received their comfort (6:24) and the first beatitude is addressed to the poor (6:20).

Luke's poor refers to the people who are really poor, just as the continuation of the beatitudes that indicate who are really hungry, who really weep and are really persecuted (Lk 6:21-23). Unlike Matthew, Luke talks about outward oppression which Matthew said its inner meaning.

Endnotes

[1] Guelich, "Mark, Gospel of," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 517-524. This article is strongly recommended for this chapter. In fact, this chapter is a slight modification and simplification of this article.

CHAPTER 12

Infancy Narrative

Introduction

The birth story found in the first two chapters of Matthew and Luke is called infancy narrative. Although Matthew and Luke wrote about the same thing, the birth of Jesus, yet there are some similarities and dissimilarities between the two presentations.

Similarities

As Matthew and Luke wrote about the birth of Jesus, there are many similarities in their accounts. Some of the most important are as follows:

1) Jesus' birth was during the reign of Herod (Lk. 1:5; Mt. 2:1)
2) Jesus was born from the virgin, Mary (Lk. 1:27; Mt. 1:18, 23, 25).
3) Joseph is of the house of David (Lk. 1:28; Mt 1:16, 20)
4) Angelic proclamation on the birth of Jesus (Lk. 1:28-30; Mt. 1:20f)
5) Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Lk. 1:35; Mt. 1:18, 20)
6) He was given the name 'Jesus' before his birth (Lk. 1:31; Mt. 1:21)
7) Jesus was born at Bethlehem (Lk. 2:11; Mt. 1:21)
8) They lived in Nazareth (Lk. 2:39, 51; Mt. 2:22, 23)
9) Jesus was identified as 'saviour' (Lk 2:11; Mt. 1:21)

Differences

Though the two accounts have many similarities, yet some differences are also found in the two accounts. Some of them are as under:

1) In Matthew, the birth of Jesus was foretold to Joseph (Mt. 1:20) while it was Mary in Luke (Lk. 1:31ff.).
2) In Matthew Joseph and his dreams played a link for the various narratives. In contrast, Mary is the linking figure in Luke 1–2.
3) Matthew presented only Joseph as "son of David" and the divine intervention in Mary's life was through him. However, Lukan Mary is being called 'highly favoured one,' showing Mary's significance.
4) In Matthean account, Mary is not only submissive to Joseph, but also completely silent. Matthew portrayed the traditional Jewish roles of male headship and the less importance of female, perhaps because he had a Jewish-Christian audience. However, Luke emphasized role of Mary and Elisabeth, showing his openness to the humble and meek. Thus, Luke showed his universality to all.

Theological Motifs of Infancy Narrative

We should be reminded that the Evangelists are not mere collectors nor editors nor compilers, but creative theologians who made use of their materials purposefully. Accordingly, Luke and Matthew have purposes in writing infancy narrative. Some of them are:

1) Infancy narrative, especially in Luke, is an attempt to put John in his proper place. Though he was greater than a prophet or anyone else (Mt. 11:9-11), yet he is not the Messiah who was supposed to come. Some people regarded him as the Messiah, but Lukan infancy narrative clearly shows that he is the one who makes a way for the true Messiah, Jesus.
2) Matthew tried to show his audience about Jesus' legal Davidic lineage through infancy narrative. He traced right from Abraham, but he mentioned David first before beginning the genealogy (Mt. 1:1). Matthew has his reason to legitimize Jesus as the legal heir of David because according to the Jews, the messiah is from the line of David.
3) Luke gives importance to the weaker and oppressed people like women (by showing Mary and Elizabeth as the prominent figures) and the shepherds etc. This type of acknowledgement of the discriminated people is not found in other Gospels. When we see Matthean infancy narrative, we have said that Mary is not only submissive, but completely silent. This is a clear picture of the existing patriarchal society of the Jews. In contrast to that, Luke gives special significance to the women, the oppressed class and the shepherd who were religiously, socially and economically poor people. This signifies that the birth of Jesus is beginning of emancipation of the socially oppressed, economically needy and culturally and politically discriminated section of the society today.
4) Luke tried to give emphasis on the temple piety through infancy narrative by saying Simeon (Lk. 2:29-32) and prophetess Anna (Lk. 2:36-38) who were waiting for Jesus in the temple. The ministry of God is not confined in individual ideology or body. Though individual

life is the nucleus of the spirituality yet mutual service, cooperation, coordination, helping each other, gathering together (thus ekklesia) for worship are part and parcel of the ministry of God.

5) It also attempts to convey that Jesus is the messiah for all, the lowest (shepherd, Lk. 2;8-20) and the elite people (wise men from the east, Mt. 2:1-12). The shepherd can represent the lowest of the low of the then society. They were unable to observe Sabbath due to their job. So, they were both sinners by religion and poor by profession. In fact, they were no human at all, as the Jewish life then was temple oriented or religious community. But it was to them that the birth of Jesus was first proclaimed. According to the measurement of the then religious standard, the shepherds were the wrong persons whom such heavenly good tidings was heralded. But God does not follow human standard. Thus, the outcast people of our society, who may have considered themselves as unworthy or whom the higher caste or class consider them as unworthy are worthy in the sight of God.

   Similarly, the magi, that represented the high class of the then society signifies the rich and the powerful of our society. God is the God of all; Jesus is the Messiah of all, rich or poor; powerful or powerless.

6) According to Lk. 2:32–34, Jesus is a light to the gentiles, and a glory for the people of Israel—but not for all in Israel, since he is set for the fall and rise of many. Jesus, the light to the gentiles truly breaks the Jewish exclusivism. To them they are the people of God while all others are Gentiles, the pagans. Though God chose Israelites to be the light of the world, they failed to carry out their responsibility. Jesus now in reality breaks exclusivism that all humans are the people of God.

7) It identifies Jesus' divinity. Jesus was descended from David through Joseph and as the Savior/Son of God through the Holy Spirit. This can also be clearly seen in the angelic proclamation (Lk. 1:31-33). The angel proclaimed that Mary would be overshadowed by the power of the Most High and that the child will be called Son of God.

CHAPTER 13

The Baptism of Jesus

Introduction

All the four Gospels wrote the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. John's baptism was baptism of repentance. It was meant for the sinners who felt guilty and wanted to repent and submit themselves to God. Examining themselves and found guilty, many people came to him and were baptized by him. Meanwhile, Jesus also came to John so that he would also receive baptism. Since his baptism was meant for repentance from sin, and since John knew that Jesus has no sin to repent, so he refused to baptize. However, Jesus insisted and got baptism. Though Jesus has no sin and need no baptism of repentance, yet He had reasons to be baptized by John. These can be discussed in detail:

Approval of Jesus' Sonship

Jesus' baptism presented as the anointing and the declaration of Jesus as the Son of God. While Jesus was being baptized, there came the Holy Spirit upon Jesus in the form of a dove descending from heaven and God announced that Jesus is His Son. It is also said that the main purpose of the baptism of Jesus in Luke is to announce the heavenly identification of Jesus as the 'Son' and as 'Yahweh's Servant.'[1] This anointing inaugurates the ministry of as the new age.[2]

Jesus as the Representative of the Sinners

The baptism of Jesus identifies Jesus as the messianic servant who stands in solidarity with his people in their need. As the people's representative he came "to fulfill all righteousness" (Mt 3:15) which people could not fulfill by themselves. Jesus fulfilled those demands of God on behalf of the sinners by identifying himself as the sinner who needs repentance. Matthew has portrayed Jesus fulfilling that righteousness as it is the demand of God.[3]

The Approval of Jesus' Righteousness

Matthew presented the Baptist reluctant to baptize Jesus. This is to show the righteousness of Jesus, rather than the recognition of Jesus' messianic identity.[4] Since Jesus is righteous, he did not need baptism of repentance. Matthew tried to emphasize Jesus' righteousness through the Baptist. Righteousness is a key concept in Matthew. It is the goal of discipleship, that is, the accomplishing of God's will in its fullness.[5]

The Beginning of his Ministry

Jesus was renouncing the dear and sheltered life of home and became a homeless Man. He took up that cross throughout his life. This is the real beginning of his ministry.

Jesus at Baptism Took Upon Himself the Common Sin

Jesus is sinless. However, he did not keep himself aloof from the world's sin. Jesus' sinlessness is a holy and outgoing love. Jesus at his baptism took the sin of mankind unto himself, to share the shame and pain of sin. Above all, he took it so that he can redeem sinners.[6]

Fulfilling the Will of God

Jesus affirms that it is God's will ("all righteousness") that John baptize him; and *both* John *and* Jesus "fulfill" that will, that righteousness, by going through with it. By his baptism Jesus affirms his determination to do his assigned work. Jesus, the righteous, sets example here that it is the will of God to fulfill all righteousness.

Eschatological Significance

With his baptism, Jesus is seen as the Suffering Servant. He also knows that he will suffer and die to accomplish redemption in obedience to the will of God. This is the beginning of the fulfillment of righteousness, not for him, but for the sinners. It indicates Jesus' salvation of the sinners (the sinners will become righteous) in the Last Judgment.

Endnotes

1 Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to Luke (I-Ix)*, vol. 28 (New York: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1982), 481.

2 D. S. Dockery, "Baptism," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel G. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshal (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 57.

3 Dockery, "Baptism" 57.

4 Donald A. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 1-13*, vol. 33 (Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1998).

5 Hagner, *WBC,* vol. 33.

6 George A. Buttrick, *The Interpreters' Bible: The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, vol. 7 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 267.

CHAPTER 14

Jesus Movements in Galilee and Judea

Introduction

Although the main intention of the gospel is not to mention how Jesus lives, yet they projected his life and ministry with others. According to the Evangelists, Jesus was born and brought up from a poor family; lived among the low people and called the weaker section of the then society. From this perspective, Jesus and his life, as well as his relationship with others can be projected as under.

Jesus is Poor

The Gospels witnessed that Jesus is poor from birth to death. This can be seen from various ways:

1) Though he is the Son of God, the Messiah and King of kings, yet he was not born in a palace, but in a manger. This is the first instance of his humility.

2) When Joseph and Mary went to Jerusalem, to present Jesus to the Lord, they offered a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons in the offerings (Lk. 2:21-24). According to the Jewish purification law, they were supposed to offer a lamb for burnt offering. But if she cannot afford sheep, she shall take two pegions or two turtledoves, one for burnt offering and the other for sin offering as a special concession (Lev. 12:6, 8). Mary took this concession. This indicates their poverty.

3) Jesus is homeless. Jesus left his home and parents, and became homeless. He said to someone who wanted to follow him that foxes have holes and birds have nest to settle, but he does not have home or place to lay his head (Lk. 9:58). He also called his disciples as his mother and brothers. He has nowhere to go. Instead, he formed a new and large family who accepted the Kingdom of God as their

primary needs.

4) He was buried in the tomb of others (Mt. 27:60).

So, he shares the life of the poor people who do not have home. He is the God of homeless and wanderers. Jesus clearly knows the economic poverty of his people and he does not ignore anyone today.

Jesus is the Friend of the Despised and the Oppressed

Jesus did not call the wise men and the aristocrats for his disciples. His first disciples, Peter and his brother Andrew, James and John, sons of Zebedee were fishermen (Mt. 4:18-22). Fishermen were not educated or intellectual and rich person whom people respected.

Matthew (also called Levi) was a tax collector while Jesus called him for his disciple (Lk. 5:27). Since tax collection is the service to the Roman government, the pious Jews hated this profession too much. Besides, it is a profession where the highest bidder is selected as the tax collector. They had to make profit out of their collection. In that way it was considered that they were corrupted. So, they were sinners. Due to this, the Jews despised the tax collectors in their society even if they were their fellow Jews. Meanwhile, Jesus was not hesitated to call and live with the tax collectors whom the society despised. He is the friend for such people then and now.

Jesus is the Friend of the Sinners

According to the pharisaic teaching, tax collectors and prostitutes cannot repent, and cannot be forgiven because they cannot recognize whom they sinned against, uncountable. So, they were severe sinners. While Jesus was sitting for dinner in Matthew's house with many tax collectors and sinners, the Scribes and Pharisees condemned him. But Jesus' life and ministry is closely associated with the sinners. Jesus said that he has come to call the sinners to repentance (Lk. 5:32).

A woman who was a sinner, who was despised even by the pious Pharisees, anointed Jesus with alabaster (Lk 7:36ff. and parallels). Jesus not only forgave her sin but also accepted her. He did not feel bad to be the friend of the woman sinner despite of his reputation. He even protected the prostitute from the mob who wanted to stone her. He not only protected her, but also counteracted against the people who thought themselves righteous by letting them know that they were the sinners. Jesus wanted to challenge the patriarchal society that spoiled the women's life and violated their rights. Jesus takes the side of the poor and oppressed women always.

Jesus Challenged the Existing Worship

Jesus did not deny temple/synagogue worship. Rather, his usual practice was to go to the synagogue (Lk. 4:16). However, Jesus' message is the internal life of human beings and the true relationship with God. The existing worship was very much external and superficial. The pious people prayed aloud, proclaiming their good deeds and religiosity (Lk 18:10-14). They boast of their fasting so that others would come to know (Mt. 6:16-18). Meanwhile, Jesus opposed the hypocrites who were standing in the synagogue and on the street for praying so that people would see and praise them (Mt. 6L5ff.). Contrastingly, Jesus suggested praying privately with having a right relationship with God. He used to go to hills for praying (Mk. 6:46) and prayed the whole night (Lk. 6:12). His praying was not to blow his own trumpet, but a true communication with God. Jesus' emphasis is not an outward life but inward reality of human.

Jesus is a Generous Man

Jesus' philosophy of life was to give freely and to receive freely. He was not hesitated to receive hospitality. In the like manner, he also gives freely. He gave his life for others, which is the greatest gift of all. He showed that this is a mutual love. This is contrasted to the worldly philosophy. Jesus taught that giving only to one who can repay has no value. Loving only those who love us has no value. On the contrary, Jesus taught to love enemies (Lk. 6:27-35). Jesus taught unconditional gifts and love. This is his philosophy.

CHAPTER 15

Jesus' Death as Atonement for Sin

Jesus himself said that he came for atoning human beings from sin (For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many Mk. 10:45; Mt. 20:28). The need for atonement arises from the universal sinfulness of humankind and our inability to deal with the problem created by our sin. The sinner is in a desperate situation for 'the wages of sin is death' (Rom. 6:23). Our relationship with God was broken. This is the condition of human under sin. But God in his love and mercy has made provision. Jesus made himself a sacrifice in order to set human free from sin and restored the broken relationship between God and human. This is called atonement.

The Representative Death of Jesus

While having the last supper, Jesus took a loaf of bread, broke it and said, "This is my body, which is given for you" Luke 22:19). In the same way, he also took the cup, gave thanks to God and said, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins (Mt. 26:28). These Jesus' Eucharistic words clearly mentioned that his death was a representative one. His body and blood are poured out to redeem and forgive the sins of human beings.

Jesus said that he gave his life a ransom **for** many. The Greek word for ***for*** is *anti,* which can also mean *in the place of*. In fact, there is an indication of intervention of someone *on behalf of* others.[1] Jesus intervenes and takes the place of human sinners. This preposition clearly shows that Jesus' death is an act undertaken by Jesus in the place of others (i.e. many).

For whom Jesus died

In the ransom saying of the Synoptic Gospels (Mk. 10:45 and parallel Mt. 20:28), Jesus said that the son of man came to give his life a ransom for

polloi-many (polloi,). This Greek term *polloi* is used in an inclusive sense, that means, the inconceivable many, the whole host, or all. Semitic inclusive sense is involved here.[2] So, it means that Jesus redeemed all human beings and died for all. We can never overemphasize the inclusiveness and wholeness of Jesus redemption.

Deliverance of human from the bondage of sin

Jesus used the word *lytron* to mean ransom. It has been said that slaves could be freed by giving the demanded amount of money. They were bought to become free men. That money is called ransom (*lytron*). This same word is used to mean freeing human beings who were under the bondage of sin. Jesus' **life** as a ransom for many means the **purchase money** for manumitting slaves, human beings. The idea is of an exact equivalent exchange. The root notion in the saying is therefore deliverance of human beings from the bondage. The basic concern is Jesus' death as deliverance through substitutionary means.

How does the suffering of one individual (Jesus) become significant for the redemption of the whole humanity?

As sin enters into the whole humanity through the disobedience of one man, Adam, so also redemption is wrought through the obedience of one man, Jesus. Jesus is the deliverer of the whole humanity because he is absolutely qualified for the same for he is not an ordinary human being. He is the Son of God, the Messiah, the Son of Man, above all, he is God. Therefore, his redemption is sufficient for human.

Summary

1) Jesus approached death as a voluntary act. Though it is in accordance with the divine will, yet he undertook it voluntarily.
2) The death of Jesus was seen to be directly related to the remission of sins.
3) There is evidence to show that Jesus recognized that his death would be vicarious in the sense that he was dying in the place of others.
4) Jesus' death was a sacrifice with special links with the new covenant.
5) Jesus' death is substitution as the fulfillment of the suffering servant of Isaiah.

Endnotes

1 Bauer, "ἀντι," *BDAG.*

2 "πολύς," Friberg Lexicon.

CHAPTER 16

Christological Titles

1) JESUS AS THE SON OF GOD

Background

We have a rich background on the Son(s) of God in the Old Testament.

a) **Angelic beings** are described as sons of God (Job 1:6; 2:1-heavenly beings NRSV bene ha-Elohim).

b) **The King:** In the entire Near East, the king could be called "Son of God" or even "God." Pharaoh was known as the "Good God." In the OT times, the theocratic kings were also called Sons of God (2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7).

c) **The People of God:** Israel is also called God's "Son" (Exod 4:22–23; Jer 31:9, 20; Hos 11:1). God is the "Father" of the people (Deut 32:6; Jer 3:4, 19; 31:9; cf. Isa 63:16; 64:7; Mal 2:10). All the individuals of the people are, therefore, God's "sons" and "daughters," or "children" (Deut 14:1; 32:5, 19; Isa 30:1; 43:6; 45:11; Ezek 16:20–21; Hos 2:1). This usage of the name "Son(s)" of God designates Israel as God's chosen and protected people.

d) **The Righteous People:** The collective usage of the term (Israel, as a whole, as the sons of God) was also narrowed down: God's "sons" were the righteous among the people (Mt. 5:9).

e) Adam is also called son of God (Lk. 3:38).

The title, 'Son of God' in the Old Testament reveals that whoever is called the Son of God is a special one. It does not necessarily connote biological sonship between the father and the son. Rather it signifies special and intimate relationship between the two parties, the superior and the inferior.

Jesus as the Son of God in the Synoptic Gospel

Jesus is referred to as the Son of God. This sonship carries numerous senses.

a) Favorite Designation[1]

Jesus is called 'the Son of God' by the heavenly voice at the time of baptism (Mk. 1:11) and at the transfiguration (Mk. 9:7). Demons also recognize him as the Son of God (Mk. 5:7). Jesus is also hailed as the Son of God because of his power over the spirit world (Mk. 3:11; 5:7).

b) Jesus' Messianic Title

"Son of God" is Mark's particular designation for Jesus, "Jesus Messiah, *Son of God"* (1:1). In the high priest's question—"Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed?" (Mk. 14:61)—the two designations of "Messiah" and "Son of God" explicitly come together again because "Son of the Blessed" represents a Jewish indirect way of expression (circumlocution) for "Son of God."[2]

c) Jesus' Authority over the Power of Evil

Jesus is again presented as the Son of God in the exorcism and the related narratives. In the first miracle of Mark's Gospel, an exorcism (Mk. 1:23–27), the demon addresses Jesus as "the Holy One of God," a designation suggesting a unique role and relationship of Jesus to God (1:25). They consistently address him directly as "the Son of God," (3:11). The exorcisms as such point to Jesus' authority as the Son of God to defeat Satan and his forces.

d) Jesus' Ignorance of the Time of Parousia

Regarding the exact time of the Parousia, Jesus says, "But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, **nor the Son**, but only the Father" (Mk. 13:32). Jesus included himself among the ignorant of the timing of the Parousia not as his title as the son of man, but as Son of the Father, God.[3] This is no doubt about his humility and complete obedience of the Father. It does not mean anything about inequality with the Father.

e) Jesus Intimacy with the Father

Jesus specially reveals his close intimacy with the Father by saying, "All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Mt. 11:27). This

indicates that Jesus is the personal tradition of God.[4] He is the special Son to whom all things have been given. One who knows the Father knows the Son and vice versa. Such close relationship is being revealed as the Son of God.

2) JESUS AS THE SON OF MAN

Introduction

Among all other titles, the Son of Man is the phrase used more frequently than any other to refer to Jesus in the Gospels. Within the Gospels it is found only in sayings ascribed to Jesus. This evidence shows that "the Son of man" functions as a self-designation. It never became a way for other people to refer to Jesus.

Background

There are a variety of theories about the pre-Christian background of the title, Son of Man. It is usually traced from Daniel chapter 7, 4 Ezra 11–13 and The Parables of Enoch (1 Enoch 37–71). But many scholars claim that 4 Ezra and 1 Enoch are later than Christian era, and they discard them as the background. The phrase 'son of man' is being used a good number of times in Psalms and in the Book of Ezekiel. However, it is also not certain if this expression emphasizes the prophet's mere human status before God. Some scholars claim that the Psalmist's and Ezekiel's son of man do not have relation with the synoptic Gospels' Son of Man. Therefore, the background of the Son of Man is mostly traced from the book of Daniel chapter 7.

In the night visions Daniel saw '*one* like the Son of man' came with the clouds of heaven. Although this figure has the appearance of a human being, it is, in fact, a heavenly figure. Although the one like a Son of Man is never called "king" or "anointed one" (messiah), this heavenly figure is given royal powers and dignities ("dominion, glory, and kingship"), and all nations will "serve" him (Daniel 7:13-14). The Son of Man in Daniel defeated all the four beasts and He won victory. This is applied to the messiah in the Jewish tradition and again applied to Jesus in the early Christianity.

Son of Man in the Synoptic Gospels

The synoptic gospels portrayed Jesus as the Son of Man in three ways:

a) The Present Authority of Jesus

Jesus speaks of his authority to forgive sins (Mk. 2:10) and of his lordship of the Sabbath (Mk. 2:28). In both cases Jesus used the title Son of Man.

This indicates that this phrase is a specific title used to portray Jesus' authority.

b) Jesus' Suffering

When Jesus predicted his death and resurrection, he used this title. Instead of directly saying that he would suffer and die, he rather said, "Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and *of* the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed" (Mk. 8:31). In this way, he referred himself as the Son of Man, especially regarding his suffering. He also said that the Son of Man … gives his life a ransom for many (Mat. 20:28; Mk. 10:45).

c) Jesus' Future Glorification

Another usage of the title Son of Man is seen about Jesus' glory in future. Jesus himself used this title which immediately followed his suffering. Jesus predicted the coming of the Son of Man (he himself) in glory with the glory of his Father with the holy angels (Mark 8:38). Such saying is also seen in Mk. 13:26 in which the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

3) JESUS AS THE MESSIAH

Introduction

The English word 'Messiah' is derived from Aramaic *mesichâ,* reflecting Hebrew *masiach,* which means 'anointed.' In Greek, it is *Christos,* which is again translated as 'Christ.'[5] As the Israelites suffered a lot from their enemies times and again, they longed for the strong and peaceful, as well as prosperous and theocratic Davidic kingship. Since God promised His people the restoration of Davidic throne and salvation of His people from their enemies, they always expected their new kings to be the savior. This expectation appeared in post-exilic Judaism. The expectation of the messiah became common in intertestamental Judaism. However, not all Jews expected the messiah. In the 1st century CE many had lost faith in the Davidic dynasty, which had not ruled for 500 years; and there are Jewish books that treat of eschatological questions without ever mentioning the messiah.[6]

Development of Royal Messianism

There were some special people who were sent by God to save Israelites from their oppressors such as Moses, the judges, Nehemiah, Ezra. But Messianism we discuss here meant the salvific role of people as a king or kings.

a) The First Stage of Development

In the early stages of Davidic monarchy in Judah every anointed king was accepted as a savior sent by God to his people. This is seen in the oracle of Nathan (2 Sam 7; Ps 89; 1 Chr. 17). The election of David by Yahweh is seen in Ps 89:20-38. This oracle is echoed in Ps. 132. However, the oracle does not speak of any individual successor, nor does it look into the eschatological future. It simply talks about the dynasty itself. It is an assurance that the Davidic dynasty will continue. The deliverance by David and his house does not go beyond the political salvation.[7]

The Royal Psalm (in particular Pss. 2; 72; 110) should be considered in this first stage of Messianism. Ps 72 may be the clearest expression of the idea of the king savior. According to this Psalm, the king is understood as the messiah. In the meantime, nowhere in the Psalms is the king presented as a future eschatological deliverer. He is the reigning successor of David and the heir to the covenantal promises made to David.[8]

b) The Second Stage of Development

There was a development in the royal Messianism in the writings of the 8th century. That was due to the failure of the successors of Davidic throne such as the wicked king Ahaz. People lost their hope of Messianic deliverer because of his ungodly reign. Isaiah proclaimed the revival of Davidic dynasty and its permanence. Yahweh would soon raise up a successor of David who would be worthy of the name of Davidic king, a charismatic power, just as David.[9] That one would establish justice, build a vast empire and bring peace to it (Is. 9:5).

The hope for a revival of the dynasty was also proclaimed by Micah (Mic. 5:1-6), a contemporary of Isaiah. He saw a new David coming from Bethlehem to give his people security against the Assyrian threat. The restoration of the dynasty appears also in Jer. 30:9, 21. However, they do not emphasize the function of the king savior as an eschatological and supra-mundane.

c) The Third Stage of Development

The fact that the Davidic line no longer ruled after the exile caused an intense shift in Messianism. Before the exile the ideal king who would restore the vigor of the Davidic line could always be thought of in terms of the next generation of a reigning dynasty. But now there could be no ideal king until the Davidic throne would be restored. Thus the expectations began to move toward the indefinite future; and rather

than centering of one monarch in a continuing line of rulers, these expectations came to center on one supreme king who would represent Yahweh's definitive intervention to save his people. It is in this period that we may begin to speak of the messiah in the strict sense. Earlier scripture (royal Psalms) was now reread with this new messianic understanding in mind.[10]

Although there is not clear evidence that the messiah was thought of as a transcendental figure yet his work would be the manifestation of the power of Yahweh that would represent the direct saving act of Yahweh. That Messiah would be Yahweh's representative in saving His people. Because of this, it would not be the work of ordinary human, but the kind of visible inbreak of Yahweh's power into history as it was seen in the exodus.[11]

We can summarize that in the course of 1000 years Israelites Messianism developed from human king-savior to the heavenly being. While this king-savior would be a political savior, he would be a savior by the power of Yahweh, and so his saving acts would never be merely political. In his reign, the messiah would bring to Israel the ideal rule of Yahweh.

The Messiah as Heavenly Being

The expectation of the messiah as a human, being a Davidic king or charismatic leader seemed to be gradually abandoned during this time. One can conjecture that the Jews were frustrated due to the failure of all the Davidic or any other rulers to save their nations from their yoke. As a result, the expectation of the direct intervention of God in history developed. This is found in several writings.

Russel strongly negated the interpretation of the 'one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven' (Dan. 7:13) as the Messiah. He also affirmed that his is not an individual but rather a symbol for the glorified Israel in the coming eschatological kingdom.[12] But this claim is not convincing. It seems that this is the beginning of the Messianic expectation from directly from heaven. This Daniel's 'son of man' is related times and again in other writings. In II Baruch 27-30[13] Messiah is seen as a heavenly being, and in his advent, the dead shall rise again.

The Ethiopic Book of Enoch also says that the 'son of man' is a heavenly figure who will be a staff to the pious and a judge of the ungodly.[14] The Messiah is also pictured as a King over the united humanity who will no longer know sin.[15]

The Qumran people expected two Messiahs: the Messiahs of Aaron

and Israel. The Messiah of Aaron would be the anointed High Priest, and the Messiah of Israel would be the anointed Davidic king.[16] Similarly, the idea of two Messiahs was found in *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*[17] and among the medieval Karaites, a sect influenced by Qumran thought.[18]

But the idea or theory of more than one Messiah is not a popular expectation among the Jews. This is clearly seen in the apocalyptic book of the OT Daniel (Dan. 7:13). Daniel, in the night vision, saw like the 'son of man' who came with the cloud. This 'son of man' is no other than the awaited Messiah. He is no longer an earthly king but one with supra-mundane power.

In those days, they could not win victory over God's enemies on the field of battle, as in the days of the Old Testament, it is assumed that the battle had to be joined in the spiritual realm. As they were in such desperation, they believed that only God's direct intervention in history in terms of the Messiah could save the saints of God. Therefore, ultimate victory belonged to God's saints, no matter how dark the present situation might be. As a result, the Messiah whom they were waiting for occupied more important place in those days.[19]

The Suffering Messiah

Did Judaism expect suffering Messiah? This is a difficult question. However, some scholars, such as Joachim Jeremias, claimed that such expectation is probable in the late Judaism. In their assumption, the Servant Songs in Deutero-Isaiah (Is. 42:1ff.; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; and 52:13-53:12) are applied to the Messiah.[20] This idea was pre-New Testament. It is assumed that this suffering was thought of as for the atonement of Israel's sins. However, the idea that the Messiah would be rejected by His own people was entirely unthought of at that time.[21]

In fact, Messiah to suffer and the Servant of Yahweh in Deutero-Isaiah as the suffering Messiah is of late date. It can be a Christianized Christology that identified the Suffering Messiah and Jesus. Such identification can be found in many passages in the New Testament, especially in the Gospels.

The Zealots and Their Messianic Expectation

In 6 CE, the Romans turned Judea into a Roman province and conducted a census in preparation for tax assessment. In some Jewish circles this resistance evoked especially within a group of Pharisees who had separated themselves from the pharisaic society. They were zealous for the Law, and refused to obey the Romans. This group was known as

the Zealots. In response against to the Roman order, Judas the Galilean called for non-cooperation with the census and incited people to rebellion against Rome. He viewed that the land belonged to God, and the Romans had no right to claim the ownership implied by a census. Judas rebuked his countrymen for being willing to submit to Roman slavery and for giving up the freedom they had fought so hard (under the Maccabees) to obtain. Judas and his followers opposed Jews who cooperated with the census, for they considered cooperation with Caesar to be an idolatrous transgression of the First Commandment to have "no other lords before me." They straightforwardly refused to submit to the rule of the Roman emperor and to call him 'Lord.' They were not willing to wait patiently, as the Pharisees did, for the future messianic transformation, but wished to determine the course of history by their own active involvement. Judas' small and unsuccessful revolt was carried out in the belief that if the Jews were faithful to the covenant, God would honor their cause by bringing victory in the struggle against Rome. Judas was apparently killed as a result of his actions.

Messianic Expectation and the Birth of John the Baptist

The birth of John the Baptist was unnatural because Elizabeth was considered barren, and the couple were both old age. Besides, people witnessed the situation of Zachariah how he saw a vision in the temple. When their son was named John, immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. All who heard that thing were wondered and said, "What then will this child become?" The supernatural birth and his life in the wilderness that made people to think that he might be Elijah to come, as well as his wonderful ministry (baptism of repentance) motivated the Jewish people to think that he might be the Messiah. As a result, the Sanhedrin sent priests and Levites to verify if he were the Messiah. This clearly indicated that they were eagerly waiting for the appearance of the Messiah. He then confessed that he is not the Messiah, but the forerunner of the Messiah (Jn. 1:20; 3:28). Baptist did not directly use the title 'messiah' to describe Jesus. He said that the Coming One will baptize with the Holy Spirit. In fact, the outpouring of God's Spirit is one of the elements of the messianic age when the messianic King will reign in righteousness and prosperity, and justice and peace will prevail (Is. 32:15). He too announced that this should be fulfilled through Jesus. This implicitly tells that the Baptist declared that Jesus is the Messiah. In this way, we can say that the birth of John the Baptist inaugurated the fulfillment of the promises given to Israel. In turning many of the children of Israel to the Lord, John preaches the good news of salvation (Lk. 1:16–17, 68, 73, 77).

The Birth of Jesus-the Fulfillment of Jewish Messianic Expectation

John the Baptist denied that he is the Messiah. Rather, he testified that Jesus is the Messiah who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. Jesus as the Messiah is implicitly seen in the Gospels. When Peter proclaimed that he is the Christ (Messiah, Mk. 8:29) Jesus accepted this but commanded them not to tell anyone. He is not only Messiah; he is the Messiah who is also the Son of God (Jn. 20:31; 1:49; 11:27). He is the Messiah in the sense that he fulfills the Old Testament hope of a coming deliverer (Jn. 1:45).

Jesus, as the Messiah, began to proclaim about the Kingdom of God. It can be said that Jesus' main mission is about the Kingdom of God, preached and acted. The ministry of Jesus, from the beginning, is a ministry of conflict with the demonic forces. The devil took control over all aspects of life, even to the extent of religious life. Since the work of Jesus was to overcome the demonic kingdom and to establish the Kingdom of God, the two forces encountered each other in every aspect of life. As a result, Jesus did not leave any part of life untouched. He counteracted the work of the devil directly and indirectly by means of healing and casting demons from the demon possessed. He challenged and argued against the religious authorities, conflicted against the existing culture and political authorities.

The theme of Jesus' ministry 'the kingdom of God' is a translation of the Greek term, '*He Basileia tou Theou*.' The literal meaning in Greek is 'kingship,' 'royal rule' or 'sovereignty.' The OT also speaks about it. In Hebrew, it is 'malkuth' which also means the 'kingdom of God,' 'God's sovereignty.' His reign is eternal and therefore beyond time. The Jews dreamt of the blessed time when the living God would finally rule, overthrow the power of evil and rule with mercy over His faithful people. The same idea and understanding of the kingdom of God is found in the NT. But it is not a geographical territory where God is the king outside which someone else rules. Rather, it is the kingdom where the Rule of God is found in human heart. Therefore, a preferable translation might also be a 'kingly rule,' 'reign' or 'sovereignty.' All these expectations are fulfilled in the life, work and teaching of Jesus the Messiah.

Jesus as the Messiah according to the Synoptists

a) Mark

In Mark, Jesus as God's Anointed One, the Messiah, is confirmed at various places:

i) It was confirmed at the baptism, the first appearance of Jesus in the story (1:11-15). The voice from heaven at the baptism (1:11) calls Jesus "my son," an echo of Psalm 2:7. Since this Psalm most likely was a royal Psalm used at the coronation of the king in Israel, the royal connotation of Jesus as the anointed king, the Messiah, would naturally follow.

ii) When Jesus asks the disciples who they say he is, Peter responds correctly, "You are the Messiah" (8:29). This is clearly seen in 14:62. Jesus did not deny this affirmation but commanded his disciples not to reveal to anyone until the time has come.

iii) After the arrest and during the trial by the Sanhedrin, the high priest asked Jesus about his identity in terms of "the Messiah, Son of the Blessed" (14:61). Jesus answered affirmatively: "I am" (14:62).

b) Matthew

Matthew's emphasis on the royal connotations of the term "Christ" or 'Messiah' is indicated in 2:1–4, where the Magi ask about the birth of the "king of the Jews" and Herod responds by inquiring about OT prophecies of the birthplace of "the Christ."[22] Herod's word itself connotes royal sense.

Matthew not only tries to say Jesus as the Messiah or Christ, but also lifted him the exalted Messiah. Peter acclaims Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God." This emphasis, "Christ" as the "Son of the living God" underscores Jesus' exalted status, and "the Christ" emphasizes that this divine Son fulfills all messianic hopes.[23]

Matthew emphatically says that their true "master" is "the Christ." This reflects Matthew's emphasis that "the Christ" is the authoritative teacher of the community.[24]

c) Luke

Thus, as with the other Synoptics, in Luke the claim that Jesus is "Christ" is not simply an identification of him with Jewish expectations but is a redefinition of the meaning of messiahship. And this redefinition is based almost entirely on the story of Jesus, producing a distinctively Christian notion of "the Christ." Luke emphasizes the sufferings of "the Christ" as the divinely predicted completion and core of his earthly work, issuing in the proclamation of forgiveness to Israel and the world (24:47) recounted in Acts (e.g., 1:8). For the Christians whose faith is reflected in the Gospels, Jesus was certainly much more than the Messiah of any

Jewish expectation, but they never surrendered the claim that Jesus was also the true Messiah.[25]

Jesus' Messianic Authority

Bultmann regarded that the miraculous deeds are not proofs of Jesus' character but of his messianic authority or his divine power. The stories of the exorcism of demons were of especial significance to the church as proofs that Jesus was Messiah.[26] The story of the Widow's Son at Nain (Lk. 7:11-17) also constitutes a Messianic sign, that of the raising of the dead. The exclamation of the bystanders also acknowledged the messianic implication of that miracle.[27] Fuller emphatically regarded the healings, exorcism and raising from the dead are all signs that Jesus is the prophet-Messiah sent from God.[28]

Christ was powerful in speech and action (Lk. 24:19). His miracles are called duna,meij, because in them God's rule on earth begins to have a powerful effect, and the fight against the devil is carried out on the level of human existence (Lk. 19:37; Acts 10:38). Jesus' miracles are worked by a power within himself (Mk. 5:30 par. Lk. 5:17; Mk. 6:14; Matt. 12:22-30; Mk. 6:2, 5). Luke links this Godgiven power with the Holy Spirit in Lk. 1:35; 4:14; Acts 1:8; 10:38. The miracles, therefore, are regarded as evidence from God that Jesus is the Messiah, the One anointed with the Spirit (Acts 2:22; 10:38). The exaltation of the Messiah further makes him the mediator of God's saving might.[29]

Though we say that the Synoptists claim the messiahship of Jesus but the literal words of Jesus in Mk. 8:29; 14:61: Mt. 26:64 etc. do not straightforwardly indicate that he is the Messiah. In fact, most of the occurrences in the Gospels tell us that 'Messiah' or 'Christ' is a title rather than a proper name. We can summarize that Jesus made no overt claim to be Messiah, yet he did not reject messiahship when it was attributed to him; and before the Sanhedrin, when directly accused of claiming messiahship, he assented, but gave his own definition of the term. He was the heavenly Messiah of the Son of Man.

Endnotes

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24 Hurtado, 112.
25 Hurtado, 113.
26 Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 219, 226.
27 Alan Richardson saw the scene of raising of the widow's son as full of meaning. Nain was near the ancient city of Shunem where Elisha's miracle had been performed. Further, the exclamation of the bystanders, "A great prophet is arisen among us" (Lk. 7:16) also indicates that they have correctly perceived the OT parallels, and their further comment, "God has visited His people," (cf. Lk. 1:68) is an acknowledgment of the messianic implication of the miracle. Cf. Alan Richardson, *The Miracle-Stories of the Gospels* (London: SCM Press Ltd., [1941], 1959), 113.
28 R. H. Fuller, *Interpreting the Miracles* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1963), 85f.
29 Hans Dieter Betz, "Might," in *New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, [1967], 1971), 603.

CHAPTER 17

The Kingdom of God

Introduction

The phrase 'the kingdom of God' is a translation of the Greek term, 'He Basileia tou Theou.' The literal meaning in Greek is 'kingship,' 'royal rule' or 'sovereignty.' The OT also speaks about it. In Hebrew, it is 'malkuth' which also means the 'kingdom of God,' 'God's sovereignty.' The beginning of this idea may have been during the time of Samuel when Yahweh was regarded as king of Israel. In the OT understanding, in that kingdom of God, God is now and always king. His reign is eternal and therefore beyond time. It also has prophetic meaning. The Jews dreamt of the blessed time when the living God would finally rule, overthrow the power of evil and rule with mercy over His faithful people.

The kingdom of God in the NT

The same idea and understanding of the kingdom of God is found in the NT. It is not about a geographical territory where God is the king outside which someone else rules. Rather, it is the kingdom where the Rule of God is found in human heart. Therefore, a preferable translation might also be a 'kingly rule,' 'reign' or 'sovereignty.'

Aspects of the Kingdom of God

1) Future Kingdom of God

The prayer, *'Thy kingdom come'* has both a present and future application. If the kingdom were only present, the request for its coming in the Lord's Prayer has no sense.[1] The coming of the Son of man in judgment is also future judgment.[2] So, some scholars say that the kingdom is wholly eschatological and has no present meaning. They interpret the kingdom of God as the final and total destruction of the devil and his angels, and where the society is not mixed with evil. In this sense, it is purely future because this kind of society is not found here on

earth. The outstanding theologians who support this are J. Weiss and A. Schweitzer.

2) Present Kingdom of God

This is seen from Jesus' ministry of exorcism. The salvation bringer, Jesus who cast out demons, has come and established the awaited kingdom. This life has begun in the present age. One can experience eternity now.[3] The rule of God is experienced now.

This is true, but some scholars are too extreme, and they believe that there is no more future kingdom because everything is accomplished here and now. They think that Jesus' ministry is the fulfillment of the OT promise in history. The supporters are C. H. Dodd, T. W. Manson etc.

3) Inaugurated Kingdom of God

The third view states that the kingdom of God has been inaugurated by Jesus in the present, and it will be fully accomplished in the future.[4] According to this, the kingdom has begun, but its final fulfillment is in the future. According to the Jewish expectations, only the salvation-bearer of the end-time can bind the prince of demons.

So, Jesus, when he cast out demon, he, said, "If it is by the finger of God that I cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you" (Mk. 11:14-23). He then really cast out the demons. With this expression Jesus indicates that in his doing, the coming kingdom of God has dawned. The kingdom of God is started, and it will be fulfilled in future. Several scholars support this view.

NATURE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

1) The Kingdom of God is a really present one

Before the coming of Jesus, the Kingdom of God was only a thought and dream which they expected to come. But Jesus said it is here and now. In has arrived on the earth and is a present reality.

2) The Kingdom of God is Boundless and Universal

Jesus teaches that the kingdom is not limited to any time and space but found everywhere at any time. Though the Jews were waiting for the kingdom in which they will rule over the others with the Messiah, yet Jesus teaches that it is for all the people, and the members will be the poor, oppressed, despised and downtrodden of the society. It is universal for all.

3) It is a Theo-Centric Kingdom

It is the kingdom where God is the only ruler. God is at the centre and there is no place for any human interference or ruling over the weaker sections. Everything is according to the will of God only. In the new community of Jesus, whoever wishes to be great must be servant of others (Mt. 20:26). This is against the ordinary kingdom where the great ones are tyrants over the others (Mt. 20:25).

4) It is a Dynamic Kingdom

Jesus defeated the strong man (Satan) and bound (cast out demon) him. He is the stronger one. Defeating the strong man indicates that Jesus' ministry is dynamic and powerful work. It involves activity. So, the Kingdom of God is dynamic, moving and powerful. It fights against social evils and sins of today.

5) It is the Kingdom of Justice

John the Baptist proclaimed that the kingdom will be salvation for the righteous but a fiery judgment for the unrighteous (Mt. 3:12). The people of God will also do and act justly because it is the will and the nature of God. There is no discrimination between the rich and the poor, the haves and the have-nots, the strong and the weak, men and women, high class and low class, high caste and casteless. There will be equality in this Kingdom.

6) It is the Kingdom of the Poor

Matthew speaks about the poor in spirit while But Luke has special emphasis on the really poor in their Beatitudes. According to Luke, they are the really poor, oppressed, destitute, economically poor and socially sidelined. However, Jesus takes the side of the poor and is harsh to the rich. The poor are blessed; they are the citizens of the new Kingdom and their salvation is in the present. It is good news for the poor and bad news for the rich. This is seen in several sayings of Jesus such as the Great Banquet (14:15-24), the Parable of the Rich Fool (12:12-21), Nazareth Manifesto (Lk. 4:16ff.) etc. Therefore, landless, homeless, street dwellers, street beggars, maimed, blind, lame, physically handicapped, poor, oppressed, discriminated people of our society are the citizens in the kingdom of God.

Conclusion

We can now say that the Kingdom of God is not an abstract, but a real Kingdom in which there is a sovereignty of God in human heart. It not

only present in which there is no future aspect. Rather, it has been inaugurated with Jesus and the fulfillment is lying ahead. The Kingdom of God is the good news for the poor and the oppressed because Jesus has already inaugurated. It is the kingdom where justice prevails and the poor are the citizens.

Endnotes

1 Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Secundarabad: OM Books, 2003), 416.
2 Mk. 8:38; 13:26–32 and 14:62, and with the summons given the disciples to watch in 13:33–37.
3 D. H. Johnson, "Life," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 470.
4 Johnson, 470.

CHAPTER 18

Parable and Jesus' Parables of the Kingdom of God

Meaning of Parable

In the classical Greek, from Plato and Socrates on, the word *parabolê* is derived from Greek word *paraballô* (*para*, alongside; *ballô,* throw). Etymologically it signifies 'a placing of two or more objects together, usually for the purpose of a comparison.'[1]

The English word *parable* refers to a short narrative with two levels of meaning, containing in it a series of verbs, all in the past tense. It is not a mere imaginative and unreal story, but it is a life-like story. In a parable, things are what they profess to be: loaves are real loaves, stones are real stones, and lamps are real lamps, so on and so forth. In the OT Hebrew, the equivalent word is *mashal*. It means a saying containing a comparison. In the NT *parabolê* occurs only in the Synoptic Gospels (48 times) and in Hebrew (twice).

History of Interpretation

1) Allegorical Interpretation

Throughout most of the church's history Jesus' parables had been taken as allegory. That is, each and every detail of the parables has meaning. The best-known example of this is Augustine's interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:30–37) in which every item was given theological significance: the man is Adam; Jerusalem is the heavenly city; Jericho is the moon, which stands for our mortality; the robbers are the devil; the Good Samaritan is Christ etc.

2) Jülicher (1888, 1899)

Adolf Jülicher was the pioneer of modern interpretation of parables. He

denied the allegorical interpretation of Jesus' parables. He viewed Jesus' parables as simple and straightforward comparisons that do not require interpretation. They are plain and easy to understand for the people also. They have only one point of comparison: between the image and the idea being expressed.

3) C. H. Dodd and Joachim Jeremias

This era of parable studies extends from 1935 to roughly 1970. Both of them were influenced by Jülicher. They attempted to remove allegorical elements from the parables. Dodd under stood Jesus' message as realized eschatology: the kingdom had already arrived. Parables about harvest are not about a coming end time but about the time of Jesus' earthly ministry.

Jeremias interpreted Jesus' parables as future in the process of realization now.

Purpose of the Parables

Jesus' Parables can be both preaching and illustrations about the kingdom of God. However, they need interpretation. Parables demand interpretation because they point to something else. They are not merely stories to enjoy. They contain one reality to serve as a mirror of another, that is, the kingdom of God. When Jesus used parables his purpose seems to be to simplify the message of the Kingdom of God for his audience. He used parables to expound the Kingdom of God to quicken understanding by putting truth in a vivid and challenging and memorable way.[2]

In the meantime, Jesus also said that he deliberately used parables to hide God's truth from the multitudes so that they would not repent (Mk. 4:11, 12).[3] On the surface these verses argue that Jesus gave the secret of the kingdom only to his disciples while others were given in parables so that they would not understand lest they would turn and be forgiven. The latter part of this saying is from Isaiah 6:9–10.

The dominant theme in the whole chapter is "hearing," which is mentioned thirteen times. Isaiah 6:9–10 was a text on the hardness of people's hearts as they refused to hear God's prophetic word. Hardness of heart is an important theme for Mark and is even possible of Jesus' disciples.

The intent of Mark 4:10–12 is clear if one pays attention to the context. The kingdom is a kingdom of the word, and the issue is how people hear and respond to the word. Jesus taught the crowds, but his teaching called for response. Where people responded, additional teaching was given.

The strong words in Isaiah 6:9–10 were not an indication that God did not want to forgive people. They were a blunt statement expressing about something that is certain to happen and cannot be prevented. People would hear, but not really understand.

The hardness of heart and lack of receptivity that Isaiah encountered were reflected back in the ministry of Jesus. The issue is whether one's heart will be hardened or whether one will hear and respond obediently. Even receiving the message with joy is not sufficient (4:16). What is required is hearing that leads to productive living. Parables hide in order to reveal. Even though some would respond with hardness of heart and lack of hearing, Jesus taught in parables to draw out hearing and obedient response.[4] In fact, the Gospel parables are not always sun-clear. Jesus' parable is designed to make the hearers think.[5]

Parables about the Kingdom of God

Jesus used many different parables to introduce and explain the mystery of the kingdom of God. It can be describe in various approaches:

1) The Coming of the Kingdom of God

The era of the kingdom of God was beginning. Jesus said this through the parable of the Patch and Wineskins in Mk. 2:21, 22. Since the new Kingdom of God has come, the old garment of Judaism with legalism cannot hold it. The newly coming Kingdom needs new heart that is opening towards the bringer, Jesus. We see the incoming of the kingdom of God in these parables.

2) The Working of the Kingdom of God

Jesus spoke about the secret growing of the kingdom of God through different parables such as:

a) The parables of the Sower (Mt. 13:1-23 and parallel),

b) The Tares (Weeds among the wheat Mt. 13:24-30 and parallel),

c) Mustard seed (Mt. 13:31-32 and parallel),

d) The yeast (Mt. 13:33 and parallel in Lk. 13:20-21) etc.

In these parables, Jesus said that the Kingdom is working secretly and quietly among human beings. It does not force itself upon them. It must be willingly received. The parable of the mustard seed and yeast (leaven) also say that the kingdom, which was once a tiny one, will cover and rule over the whole world and will become like a great tree where birds and animals find shelter. These are the parables of the gradual growth of the kingdom of God.

3) The Universality and the Consummation of the Kingdom

Jesus said the parable of the net that is thrown into the sea catching all kinds of fish (Mt. 13:47-50). This parable had been interpreted to mean a prophecy of the church. The kingdom-church is consisted of a mixture of good and bad people who must be separated in the Day of Judgment. But this parable tends to say that the community of the kingdom in this world is not a community of a holy or pure people until the last day. Similarly, the community that gathered together beside Jesus was also like that: a mixture of tax collectors and sinners etc. rather, the Kingdom of God includes all kinds of people, and all are invited to come in. However, the kingdom will one day create such a perfect community. Before that event, the kingdom contains all such different people. The perfect community shall be made in the last day and that will be the consummation of the kingdom of God.

4) The True Citizens of the Kingdom of God

The citizens of the kingdom of God are clearly pictured in the parables of Jesus such as:

a) The parable of the great dinner (Lk. 14:15-24 and parallel Mt. 22:1-14),

b) The Dive and Lazarus (Lk. 16:19-31),

c) The Parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Lk. 18:9-14),

d) The Parable of the Camel and the Eye of a Needle (Lk. 18:25).

In these parables, the main subject is the poor and the weaker section of the existing society. They are physically disabled, economically poor, materially needy, socially despised, oppressed, sidelined and down trodden. They are given privileges, and are the special people of God. In contrast to that, the rich are presented disfavored by God. The parable of the great banquet clearly say that though the first invitees are the other people yet the people who actually enjoyed the banquet are the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man was punished in the hell while Lazarus went to father Abraham. Nothing about his goodness is written except his poverty. Luke simply wrote that God takes the side of the poor and as a result, Lazarus was also taken into the heaven. Similarly, the so-called sinner, the tax collector (Lk. 18) was also forgiven rather than the so-called righteous Pharisees. In fact, the citizens of the kingdom of God are the sinners, the poor and the down trodden that are clearly seen in Jesus' parables.

Endnotes

[1] C. H. Peisker, “Parable, Allegory, Proverb,” in *New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, [1967], 1971), 743.

[2] Archibald. M. Hunter, *Interpreting the Parables* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 13.

[3] Mark 4:11-12 And he said to them, “To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables; in order that ‘they may indeed look, but not perceive, and may indeed listen, but not understand; so that they may not turn again and be forgiven.’”

[4] Klyne R. Snodgrass, “Parable,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 597.

[5] Hunter, *Interpreting the Parables,* 13f.

CHAPTER 19

Miracles as Signs of the Reign of God

Definition and Terminology

The word “miracle” derives from the Latin *mirari,* “to wonder at.” Thaumaturge (“miracle worker”) and thaumaturgy (“miracle-working”) derived from Greek word *thauma* “wonder,” “marvel.” That which causes wonder—the extraordinary—is one essential element in miracle. The other is that the extraordinary phenomenon is inexplicable in terms of familiar, everyday causation and so is ascribed to a superhuman force or agency.[1]

Several terms, variously translated, denote this phenomenon in the New Testament: *dunamis,* “mighty work,” “miracle,” “wonder” (in the singular, Mark 6:5; usually in the plural, *dunameis* e.g., Matt 7:22; Acts 2:22); *teras,* “wonder,” “portent” (in the NT, only in the plural form *terata,* e.g., Acts 2:22; 2 Cor 12:12); *semeion,* “sign,” i.e., extraordinary sign, i.e., “miracle” (especially in John, usually in the plural, *semeia,* e.g., 2:11, 23; 20:30).[2]

Types of Miracles

Gospel miracles can be divided broadly into two types: healing miracles and nature miracles.

1) Healing Miracles

Healing miracles consist of the following:

a) Healing of sick people of various kind of sicknesses such as healing the issue of blood (Mk. 5:25-34//Lk. 8:43-48), restoration of eyesight, healing the paralyse, cleansing the lepers, etc.;
b) Raising from the dead (the widow’s son at Nain, Lk. 7:11-17), Lazarus (Jn. 11:1-44);
c) Exorcism (Lk. 11:14-23 etc.).

2) Nature Miracles

Nature miracles include calming the storm (Mk. 4:35-41), walking on the sea (Mk. 6:45-52), feeding the five thousand (Mt. 14:13-21 and parallel), cursing the fig tree (Mk.11:12-14), finding a coin in a fish's mouth (Mt. 17:24-27), arranging a large catch of fish (Lk. 5:1-11), and changing water into wine (Jn. 2:1-11).

Roles of Miracles

Each Synoptic Gospel uses the revelatory sign potential in the miracle stories as a vehicle for communicating the evangelist's reflections on the identity of Jesus and the meaning of Christian life.[3] Correspondingly, Luke also skillfully presented his miracle stories so that Jesus can be understood and comprehended in the way he wanted Jesus to be understood. In other words, all the miracles done by Jesus had special purposes so that the deeds might display what the worker of those miracles is. In this way, Jesus' miracles, according to Luke, play different roles so as to manifest the person and work of Jesus.

1) The Demonstration of the Power of God

Here *dunamis* denotes the power of God, the heavenly powers, miraculous power (in the mighty deeds, miracles) and the power which brings salvation to completion. God is the Mighty One (Lk. 1:48). Jesus himself used the reverential circumlocution of 'the power' for the name of God. All his work is supported by the knowledge of the almighty power of God (Lk. 18:27 par. Matt. 19:26; Mk. 10:27; 14:35).[4] In fact, Jesus is more than a prophet endowed with power. He is unique in his existence. This can be traced from the infancy narrative in which, the conception and birth of Jesus are miracle of incarnation in the power of God. Luke described the conception of Jesus as the miracle of the Virgin Birth. Thus, it is also said that while Luke sees Jesus Christ in terms of the prophetic view of power, he also perceives at the beginning of his existence a special and unique act of divine power which gives him the title 'Son of God.'[5]

2) The Work of God

Friedrich assumes that some of the miracles of Jesus are done by God himself (5:17), in order to authenticate him (Acts 2:22). Because God is always the active one, rather than a power streaming forth from the healer's body to do the miracle. Therefore, one does not praise Jesus the miracle worker but rather God.[6] Ezra Gould commented the miracle in the healing of a woman with the issue of blood in Mk. 5:25-34 (par. Lk. 8:43-48) that this is a case in which miracle was performed directly by

God without the intervention of Jesus, of which Jesus becomes aware by the touch of the woman.[7]

It is thought that Luke redacted his sources to emphasize the praying of Jesus, and twice this pattern appears in Luke's miracle stories (5:16; 9:29). Gerd Theissen observed that Luke, on three occasions, records that Jesus prayed shortly before divine power was manifested through or in him (5:16–17; 6:12–19; 9:29). This shows, according to Theissen, that Luke viewed Jesus' miracles (dunamis) as a dynamic, not a static, phenomenon and accords with a Lucan tendency to emphasize the work of God behind and above Jesus' ministry. Accordingly, in several miracle story endings the suppliant and/or the witnessing crowd give glory to God or in some other way, acknowledge God's activity.[8]

Prominent in the Lukan miracle accounts is a concluding acclamation: people praise God (5:26; 7:16; 9:43; 13:13; 18:43) or rejoice (13:17). This typical characteristic of miracle stories confirmed to hearers or readers of a story that a miracle had indeed occurred and commonly identified the power responsible. In the Gospel of Luke the acclamations affirm that God is working through Jesus, who by performing miracles is carrying out his divine mission (4:18–30).[9]

3) The Coming of the Kingdom of God

According to the Jewish expectations, only the salvation-bearer of the end-time can bind the prince of demons. In this context, Jesus, in the exorcism miracle (11:14-23), said, "If it is by the finger of God that I cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you." With this expression Jesus indicates that in his doing, the coming kingdom of God has dawned.[10] So, the mighty works and the preaching of the Kingdom of God are alike witnesses to the fact that the Age of Promise has dawned.[11]

The New Testament also speaks of 'powers', i.e. cosmic powers between heaven and earth that can appear in person.[12] Superhuman representatives of evil are also credited with having power, but it is always pointed out, either that their power has already been broken, or that it will shortly be abolished.[13] Jesus' miraculous deeds are also presented as the powerful manifestations and means whereby the dominion of God is established over human beings in place of the dominion of Belial. Such miracle is seen in the exorcism in 4:31-37. It reveals that a new phase of salvation-history is at work and that God's domination is being established in him.[14] Actually those things, which both the Old Testament and Judaism looked forward, God's demonstration of power in the last days, and his triumph over the

climactic rise of evil, have taken place in Jesus, and this is revealed through miracles.[15]

4) Messianic Authority

Bultmann regarded that the miraculous deeds are not proofs of Jesus' character but of his messianic authority or his divine power. The stories of the exorcism of demons were of especial significance to the church as proofs that Jesus was Messiah.[16] The story of the Widow's Son at Nain (Lk. 7:11-17) also constitutes a Messianic sign, that of the raising of the dead. The exclamation of the bystanders also acknowledged the messianic implication of that miracle.[17] Fuller emphatically regarded the healings, exorcism and raising from the dead are all signs that Jesus is the prophet-Messiah sent from God.[18]

Christ was powerful in speech and action (Lk. 24:19). His miracles are called *dunameis*, because in them God's rule on earth begins to have a powerful effect, and the fight against the devil is carried out on the level of human existence (Lk. 19:37; Acts 10:38). Jesus' miracles are worked by a power within himself (Mk. 5:30 par. Lk. 5:17; Mk. 6:14; Matt. 12:22-30; Mk. 6:2, 5). Luke links this Godgiven power with the Holy Spirit in Lk. 1:35; 4:14; Acts 1:8; 10:38. The miracles, therefore, are regarded as evidence from God that Jesus is the Messiah, the One anointed with the Spirit (Acts 2:22; 10:38). The exaltation of the Messiah further makes him the mediator of God's saving might.[19]

5) The Power and Authority of Jesus

On the basis of miraculous beginning of his existence, Jesus is equipped with special power and he is the Bearer of power. Luke also portrays him as such. His activity is the exercise of power in relation to the demonic powers of the world. In his power, he expresses his evxousi,a (authority). This kind of miracle is seen in the story of the woman with a flux of blood in which the power of Jesus is represented as the saving power which overcomes the demonic power of sickness.[20]

6) Prophetic Symbol

Luke tried to portray Jesus that he is a *thaumaturge* in the tradition of Moses, Elijah, and Elisha—that is, that he stands in the tradition of those great Hebrew prophets, and that he is unlike the other *thaumaturges* of the Greco-Roman world. As Moses worked "signs and wonders" (Acts 7:36; cf. Ex. 7:9) and predicted that "God will raise up for you, from among your compatriots, a prophet like me" (Acts 7:37; see Deut. 18:15; similarly, Acts 3:22), so Jesus was "a man attested to you by God through

mighty works and wonders and signs" (Acts 2:22)—indeed, a man "whom God raised" (2:24).[21] When Jesus summarizes his ministry in a message to Herod Antipas, it is as a prophet who works miracles and perishes as a result (13:31–33), and in mourning his death his disciples remember him as "a prophet mighty in deed and word" (24:19) who was handed over to be crucified (24:20).[22]

The large catch of fish (Lk. 5:1-11) is also interpreted as having a prophetic symbolic action of how God's word would attract human beings.[23]

7) Direct Conflict of the Devil's Work

As Jesus cast out the demons, he was accused of as having Beelzebul. Jesus used two parallel illustrations to explain that he opposed against the devil, rather than having Beelzebul (Mk. 3:23-27). He portrayed the macro-("kingdom") and micro-("household") political and social units. Having Beelzebul and casting out the demons will mean civil war and domestic conflict that means fighting against oneself or Satan standing against himself. He straightforwardly professed that he was in conflict with the devilish work.

In Mark 3:23-27 (par. Mt. 12:28ff.), Jesus said that the strong man was tied up and his house was plundered. Jesus used this parable to mean the opposing force of the Kingdom of God against the kingdom of the devil. In this parable, certain things are transparent: "strong man" stands for Satan; his "possessions" represents those possessed; the "binding" or "tying up" of the "strong man" takes place in Jesus' ministry (Jesus defeated Satan); and the "plundering" indicates Jesus' own exorcisms of those "possessed." Consequently, this saying makes clear the ultimate character of Jesus' ministry of exorcism that Satan is being "bound" or having "met his end" and Jesus set his captives free.

In Matthew 12:28, Jesus also said, "But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you" (par. Lk. 11:20, by the finger of God). With this saying, Jesus cast out the demons and also proclaimed that the kingdom of God has come. Thus, exorcism is the ministry of Jesus in order to conflict against the demonic, as well as the establishment of the kingdom of God. Similarly, out of about 26 cases of individual healing accounts in the Gospels, Jesus' focus was not only healing the physical ailment, but the forgiveness of sin. This indicates that Jesus, by healing, overcame the power of evil and sin.

8) The Miracles Lead to Faith

In the triumphal entry account, the crowd praise Jesus because they saw the 'mighty works' of Jesus (Lk. 19:37). The emphasis here is 'seeing.' Likewise, only after Peter, James and John saw the miraculous catch of fish, that they were summoned to follow Jesus. The woman who followed Jesus, Mary Magdalene, was also cured first from her possession of seven demons (Lk. 8:2-3). These accounts and others show that for Luke, knowledge of Jesus' miracles is a legitimate cause for faith in him.[24]

Endnotes

1 Harold E. Remus, "Miracle," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 857.
2 Remus, "Miracle," *ABD*, vol. 4, 857.
3 Donald Senior, "The Miracles of Jesus," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2002), 1372.
4 O. Betz, "Might," in *New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology*, ed. Collin Brown (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1975), 603.
5 Walter Grundmann, "δύναμαι, δυνατός κτλ," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, [1964], 1991), 300.
6 G. Friedrich, "δύναμις, ἐως, ἡ," in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, [1990], 1994), 358.
7 Ezra P. Gould, *The International Critical Commentary: The Gospel According to St. Mark* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, [1896], 1983), 96.
8 Cf. (Lk 5:25; 7:16; 9:43; 13:13; 17:15, 18; 18:43; 19:37) Blackburn, "Miracles and Miracle Stories," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 555.
9 Remus, "Miracle," *ABD,* vol. 4, 864.
10 Werner Georg Kümmel, *The Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1973), 37.
11 Richardson, 43.
12 Mk. 13:25; cf. Rom. 8:38; Eph. 1:21; 1 Pet. 3:22.
13 cf. Lk. 11:22; Lk. 10:19 par. Matt. 12:29 Mk. 3:27, 1 Cor. 15:24; 2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:2; 17:13 f.
14 Fitzmyer, *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to Luke (I-Ix)*, 453.
15 Betz, "Might," *NIDNTT,* vol. II, 603.
16 Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972), 219, 226.
17 That raising of the widow's son is a sign which John the Baptist would surely recognize Jesus as he would be. Alan Richardson saw that scene as full of meaning. Nain was near the ancient city of Shunem where Elisha's miracle had been performed. Further, the exclamation of the bystanders, "A great prophet is arisen among us" (Lk, 7:16) also indicates that they have correctly perceived the Old Testament parallels, and their further comment, "God has visited His people," (cf. Lk. 1:68) is an acknowledgment of the messianic implication of the miracle. Cf. Richardson, *The Miracle-Stories of the Gospels*, 113.
18 Fuller, *Interpreting the Miracles,* 85f.
19 Betz, "Might," *NIDNTT,* vol. II, 603.
20 Grundmann, "δύναμαι, δυνατός κτλ," *TDNT,* vol. II, 301.
21 Remus, "Miracle," *ABD,* vol. 4, 864f.
22 Remus, "Miracle," *ABD,* vol. 4, 865.
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CHAPTER 20

The Cross and the Resurrection as the Breaking in and Realization of the Reign of God

Introduction

The remarkable story portraying and interpreting the events of Jesus' suffering and death in the Gospels are called passion narratives. In the Synoptic Gospels the account of the Jewish plot against Jesus' life during the Feast of Unleavened Bread is usually regarded as the beginning point of the passion narrative, and ended in Jesus' burial. Thus the passion narrative in the Synoptics is found in Matthew 26–27, Mark 14–15, Luke 22–23 and John 10–19.

The climax of Jesus' conflict against the devil during his earthly lifetime happened in his passion. Since Jesus counteracted against the devilish works in the religious and political fields, the leaders severely defended their areas and tried to eliminate him. They were not sufficed only by words. They plotted against him and tried to get rid of him. In fact, Jesus did not argue against them as a revolutionary or as a rival. He simply wanted to correct and save them from the works of the devil. However, they became the agents of the devil.

Purposes of Jesus' Suffering on the Cross

Jesus' suffering is described in a great detail. The Gospel writers intended to answer clearly about the questions regarding the death of Jesus.

1) The Sonship of Jesus

The testimony of the centurion who looked at the dying Jesus ("Truly this man was God's Son!" Mat. 27:54; Mk. 15:39) says that Jesus is the Son of

God. Jesus used to call God as 'Father,' but his Sonship is now proclaimed by the Roman centurion. This is one of the most important purposes of the passion narrative.

2) Jesus is an Innocent Sufferer

According to the Roman justice, Jesus was crucified as a condemned criminal or revolutionary. Luke tried to clarify that Jesus is not such a condemned, rather, he is innocent. He used the word of the Roman centurion to prove this. According to the Third Gospel, the centurion said, "Certainly this man was innocent" (Lk. 23:47).

3) The Purpose of God

Jesus' suffering is not a criminal punishment, but the purpose of God. He predicted his suffering and death three times. He also predicted that his suffering is for the salvation of human. So, everything is the purpose of God.

4) Jesus' Triumph over Evil

When Jesus died, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom (Mat. 27:51; Mk. 15:38). The dividing wall between God and human has been broken by Jesus. Matthew wrote that as Jesus died, the tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised and they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many (Mat. 27:52-53). These sayings clearly show that Jesus overcame evil. In this way, Jesus' mission, to establish the Kingdom of God and to destroy the kingdom of the Devil is breaking in.

The Value of the Cross and the Resurrection

Bultmann used a term *the salvation-occurrence* that consists of the death and the resurrection of Jesus. To him, neither the death nor the resurrection is more important or less important. The combination of the two is *salvation-occurrence.* According to him the death and resurrection of Christ are bound together in the unity of one salvation-occurrence: "he who died" is also "he who was raised up".[1]

Käsemann argued against those who saw the cross and resurrection as "two links in a chain"—the chain in which resurrection is on top of the theology of cross. Käsemann thus declares that the cross and resurrection are to be related as "riddle and interpretation."[2]

According to Käsemann's view, it is not that the cross is a chapter in the history of the resurrection in which the resurrection excels the cross in importance. Rather, the resurrection gives meaning to the cross, with the

cross being the real center of gravity. One might almost say that the resurrection is a chapter in a book on the theology of the cross.[3]

The Events during the Death of Jesus on the Cross

Matthew recorded that at the death of Jesus, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom (Mt. 27:51). This signifies the victory of Jesus that all the barriers between God and human has been wiped away. God is directly accessible for human beings. Jesus' encounter against the Devil reached its climax on the cross and his death is the victory against the Devil. In fact, this is the culmination of the establishment of the Kingdom of God or the Reign of God.

Resurrection as the final and the truest realization of the reign of God

Jesus, in his resurrection is the first born of all creation, the inaugurator and the pioneer of resurrection. The risen Lord is understood in a new sense. He affirmed the continuation of his earthly ministry by giving the Great Commission to the disciples to go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation (Mt. 28:18, 19; Mk. 16:15). He bestowed signs and authority to the disciples to cast out demons, to speak in new tongues, miracles to pick up snakes in their hands and to drink poison that will not do any harm on them. He also gave them miraculous power to heal the sick when they lay their hands on them. The Kingdom of God which Jesus preached and established has been breaking into realization in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Endnotes

1 Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans., Kendrick Grobel, vol. I (London: SCM Press Ltd., [1955], 1959), 293.

2 Ernst Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 50.

3 Alister E. McGrath, "Cross, Theology of The," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 195.

CHAPTER 21

The New Polarization in which the Down Trodden are the Subject of Jesus' Community

During the first century CE, the poor, women, children, physically ill or impaired due to certain cultic abhorrence such as leprosy, issue of blood etc. and old aged people were down trodden in the society. Compassion on their fellow human beings was low. Many social evils were legitimized by the existing culture and religious traditions. They were very much excluded in the community. However, Jesus opened a new age in which socially oppressed, economically poor and physically sufferers are the favoured subjects. The new Jesus' community comprises of the following:

1) The Poor and the Marginalized

The term poor, especially in Luke, covers a vast meaning. They can be classified us under:

a) Economically Poor

They were the widows, orphans who depended on others for their welfare and livelihood. They constituted a third economic class positioned somewhere between the free man and the slave. They were suffering destitution and hunger. The 'poor' in Luke are the urban poor, who had two basic needs: food and shelter. The most important food at that time was bread baked from wheat. Their problem was that they were often hired on a daily basis and failure to obtain work meant that the laborer and his family went hungry the next day.[1] They suffered extreme forms of economic, social and political deprivation. For them, life was a very grim business. Apart from that, they lived in slums without

having proper shelter. They could have no social prestige. They were having virtually no hope of improvement in their condition.[2]

b) Socially Poor

The biblical word 'poor' seem to mean more than economic poverty but also destitution from the society. As they are too poor, they have no importance in the society. They were despised by others. This group consists of the beggars. They were completely dependent on others. Socially poor does not necessarily mean that they are poor economically and materially. So, this group can also consist of the tax collectors and the prostitutes. They were despised and humiliated by the society due to their profession. They were the sinners. Therefore, they did not want to have fellowship with them. They did not want to befriend them. They were socially sidelined and socially poor.

c) Physically Poor

They are the physically disabled, the maimed, the blind and the lame. This can be interpreted as the indication of the truly poor in the society. They are poor socio-economically. They refer to the poorest of the poor in Luke's Hellenistic community. They are not only physically poor, but they are also poor in a social sense. The rich looked down upon them and have no space in the society, among the rich.

2) The Impure Ones

One of the most terrible and abhorrent diseases during those days is leprosy. The OT often attributes the appearance of leprosy to God's punishment for sinful behavior. Naaman is cured from leprosy when he humbles himself, but deceitful Gehazi is cursed with it (2 Kgs 5). Miriam, complaining about Moses' marriage and leadership, was cursed with it (Num 12:10–15; cf. Deut 24:8–9).[3]

Leviticus 13 is a detail examination of leprosy. It was taught that it was an unclean disease that could contaminate others and the atmosphere as well. They had to wear torn clothes and should cover his/her upper lips and cry out, "Unclean, unclean." They were excluded from the area of human habitation or be otherwise destroyed (Lev. 13:45, 46). "To the rabbis the cure of a leper was as difficult as raising a person from the dead".

The supernatural cleansing of lepers was, however, expected as one of the signs of the messianic age. In the account of the healing of a leper (Mk 1:40–45 par.) and of ten lepers (Lk 17:11–19), Jesus showed his compassion to them in spite of their impurity. In Lk. 17, the lepers

stand "outside," the village and at a distance from Jesus, in accordance with Leviticus 13:46. In the first case, (Mk. 1:40-45), Jesus' action in touching the sufferer is best understood as one of compassion. This touch also means he is symbolically welcomed back into the community.[4]

3) Jesus' Attitude towards the Aged People

Jesus rebuked those who went against Moses' law regarding honoring parents. Though the Jews were the strict followers of Mosaic Law, they wanted to exclude themselves from serving their parents by a vow called 'Corban.' Corban means 'an offering to God' (Mk. 7:11). This is their indirect way of dishonoring their parents, that is, the old age people. In fact, 'corban' literally means 'an offering to God.' But it was misused by the younger people against their older parents by saying, "Whatever you might be benefited from me is *an offering to God!* or *Corban* is whatever you might be benefited from me!" meaning, "You shall have no benefit from what is mine!"[5]

It can mean insult or offense to aged people. But Jesus takes the side of them and rebuked those who tried to twist their religious tradition. He also accepted the service of an old woman, Peter's mother-in-law (Mt. 814-17).

4) Sick and Sufferers

In the OT, the cause of suffering is most commonly seen because of evil deeds.[6] It is the punishment due to the cycle of sins from generation to generation because God remembers the sins of forefathers (Ex. 34:6–7, with parallels in Ex. 20:5–7, Deut 5:9–10, and Num 14:18). The old idea of vengeance was still rampant. God was still regarded as a good and just God, and it was believed that evil would be punished and good would be rewarded, although this will not necessarily happen within this life.[7]

Whatever was the mindset of the people of that time, Jesus reversed the existing misconception regarding sickness and sufferings. He did not alienate the sufferers at any cost due to his compassion. Such example can be seen in Luke 13:10-17. The woman healed in this unit has long been suffering from a crippling disease. It was a Sabbath day which Jews prohibited any kind of working, including healing. Despite of the earlier objection and trouble on Sabbath healing (Lk. 6:6-11), his compassion did not keep him from bringing "liberty" to this particular "captive" (4:18).

As expected, the leader of the synagogue stood against such work on Sabbath. But Jesus justified his healing by comparing the woman's

restriction to that of an animal which they gave water even on Sabbath day. This objection shows that they have more regard for the thirst of their animals over *one* sabbath day, than for the Satan-bound condition of this woman over *eighteen years*. But Jesus' love and compassion on the sufferers is more than religious rites and rituals.[8]

Endnotes

1 In the first century CE there was no general system of wheat-distribution in the cities of the roman East. Rome, of course, did have a public corn-distribution system. However, it was limited to a fixed number of roman citizens who were residents of the capital. Resident foreigners, such as Jewish expatriates were ineligible. Esler, 175.

2 Esler, 179.

3 David P. Wright and Richard N. Jones, "Leprosy," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992).

4 P. Ellingworth, "Leprosy," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 463.

5 Robert A. Guelich, *Word Biblical Commentary: Mark 1-8:26*, vol. 34a (Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1998).

6 B. Gärtner, "Suffer," *TDNT.*

7 Daniel J. Simundson, "Suffering," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992).

8 John Nolland, *Word Biblical Commentary: Luke 9:21-18:34*, vol. 35b (Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1998).

CHAPTER 22

Men-Women Relationship: Divorce

Jesus seems to either break or nullify the laws especially regarding the sabbatical laws. He also seems to replace the Old Testament laws by saying “You have heard…but I say to you…” (Mt. 5:21-43). However, Jesus is stricter than the so-called conservative and hardcore followers of Judaism or the so-called champions of legalism especially regarding the matter of relationship. One of such teachings is dealt in this chapter. The Pharisees asked Jesus if it is lawful for a man to divorce his wife (Mk. 10:2). This question that the Pharisees addressed to Jesus is still a troubling one today.[1]

Divorce in the Old Testament

The great debate over divorce among the rabbis of Second Temple Judaism focused on two OT texts: Gen 2:22–24 (with 1:27) and Deut. 24:1–4. Gen 2:22–24 teaches that God created males and females (Gen 1:27) in order to re-create them into an inviolable union. Marriage thereby establishes a new physical relationship (“one *flesh*”) comparable to other familial relationships, held together by a natural (i.e., hereditary) and therefore indissoluble covenant.[2]

However, the prohibition of remarriage (Deut 24:4a) is also there. In this verse, remarriage is prohibited if she is **defiled or unclean.** But this prohibition was a practice regulated by unknown customs or rules. In Deut. 24:1, it is said that men could officially divorce his wife on condition that she does not please her husband. Indeed, the practical issue in the debate between rabbis was to explain the grounds for divorce, centering on the meaning of the vague phrase (Deut 24:1) “an indecent thing,” which when found in a woman brought her into disfavor with her husband and gave him reason to issue her “a bill of divorcement.” Two schools of rabbinic interpretation establish the range

of possible meanings of this 'indecent thing.' The school of Shammai contended that the phrase referred to unlawful sexual behaviors. The school of Hillel contended for a much broader definition which included childlessness, cultic offenses, and even failure to complete household tasks.[3]

Divorce in the New Testament

Jesus' teaching on divorce (Mt. 5:31–32; 19:3–9; Mk. 10:2–12; Lk. 16:18) can be understood from the background of this rabbinic discussion of the deuteronomic text as well as the "one flesh" ideal of the creation narrative. The Lukan version seems to be is the most significant. Looking from the male perspective of Palestinian Judaism, Jesus challenges that the man who initiates a divorce, who marries a divorced woman, or who then remarries another woman commits adultery. Although his teaching was similar to that of the Qumran Essenes, it was dissimilar to current, mainstream rabbinic teaching in three ways: (1) it prohibited remarriage, even to the woman with a bill of divorcement; (2) it broadened adulterous behavior to include a man's infidelity (cf. Mark 10:11) and a woman's remarriage; and (3) it ruled out serial monogamy.

Jesus' Teaching on Divorce as Found in Mark 10:2-12 and Matthew 19:3-12

The debate during Jesus' lifetime focused on the acceptable grounds for divorce.[4] It also appears from Matthew that the question addressed to Jesus was asked in a framework of the rabbinic debates on divorce. These debates centered around Deut 24:1-4 and the question of what the words "some indecency in her" signified.

There is a misinterpretation in these passages even by the Pharisees. It is apparent that the passage in Deut 24:1-4, which originally was meant to protect the wife and give her certain safeguards: possession of divorce papers, right to remarry, prevention of the former husband from interfering in a subsequent marriage, and so on. But this was viewed from the perspective of how one could divorce his wife. As a result the major concern of the debate seemed to involve defining what constituted "an indecency." In their mindset, they thought that it is lawful to divorce on justifiable grounds, which even Moses did not clearly write. Due to this unobvious cause, the Jews began to interpret for men's advantages against women.

The Interpretation of Jesus' Teaching on Divorce by Matthew

The context in which Jesus uttered this was one in which a man could

divorce his wife for such causes as her burning his supper, his finding a prettier wife, and so forth. It would appear therefore that Jesus, here, exaggerates or overstates his point in order to reveal how contrary the whole concept of divorce is to the divine purpose. Jesus in his teaching sought to reveal that divorce is contrary to God's intention. Marriage is for Jesus "until death does you part." Yet Matthew teaches that there is at least one instance in which divorce is permissible. In the case of adultery divorce is permissible. It is not mandatory, but it is permissible.[5]

For the disciple, who seeks to live a life "more righteous than the scribes and Pharisees" (5:20), neither the hardness of heart (cf. 5:28) which made the deuteronomic legislation necessary (19:8a) nor the adultery which makes divorce possible can be permitted. Thus, while Matthew apparently allows divorce if adultery is found, such a possibility is debatable for the righteous disciple. Clearly, the sum of the synoptic tradition argues that Jesus' teaching intended to create among his disciples intolerance for divorce even though Jewish law tolerated it.[6]

The Interpretation of Jesus' Teaching on Divorce by Mark

Among the Jesus' sayings on divorce, Markan account (10:1-12) is peculiar from others. Matthew and Luke added exceptional clause, a condition for divorcing wife (if they are indecent). But Mark does not have this exception on any ground. Mark's Jesus simply said, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery (Mk. 10:11, 12). Scholars assume that the other Evangelists (Matthew and Luke) furnish Mark, their source and added this exception. Thus, Mark's account seems to be the most authentic.[7]

For Mark, there is no point for divorce. Jesus did not accept the current Jewish tradition that accepts divorce. Instead, he interpreted that Moses permitted them official divorce due to their hardness of hearts. The purpose of God is to become one, but not separation on any ground.

Application in Our Own Context

Matthew and Paul list two instances in which divorce is permissible even if not mandatory: adultery, and desertion by an unbelieving spouse.

The emphasis of Jesus is not on the "exceptions" (in case of adultery or marrying unbelieving spouse) in which divorce is permissible. Rather, he seeks to emphasize the permanence of marriage. The divine intention is a marriage "until death us do part." A divorce, any divorce, reveals a failure of the divine purpose of marriage. Divorce, for whatever the cause, witnesses to a failure somewhere of what God originally ordained for

his creation. The ideal is a lifelong, monogamous marriage that resembles the love affair of Christ and his Church (Eph. 5:22-33).

Yet divorce does happen among Christians. What should the Church do in this regard? The Church would never forget that God delights in forgiveness. A divorce signifies the failure of the divine purpose in the life of the couple. The Church need not minimize the failure that divorce signifies, but it needs to assure both divorced sinners and non-divorced sinners that God delights in forgiveness and that God forgets. Then it must seek to help in every way possible to make any subsequent marriage an example of the divine ideal.

Although the Jewish tradition permitted divorce on some arranged fictitious grounds Jesus did not follow this tradition. In his new community, Jewish patriarchy that violates men-women relationship, especially women's rights regarding easy divorce on certain small and irrational causes, does not occupy place. Instead, Jesus prohibits any form of divorce. He rather promotes permanence of marriage as it is the purpose of God.

Endnotes

1 Robert H. Stein, "Is It Lawful for a Man to Divorce His Wife?," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 22, no. 2 (June 1979): 115-121.
2 Robert W. Wall, "Divorce," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, [1992] 1997).
3 Wall, "Divorce," *ABD.*
4 Jr. Robert W. Herron, "Mark's Jesus on Divorce: Mark 10:1-12 Reconsidered," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25, no. 3 (September 1982): 273.
5 Stein, "Is It Lawful For a Man to Divorce His Wife?" *JETS,* 119.
6 Wall, "Divorce," *ABD.*
7 Stein, "Is It Lawful For a Man to Divorce His Wife?" *JETS,* 115.

CHAPTER 23

The Status of Children in the Community of Jesus

It is obvious that women and children, though their importance is equally to men, were discriminated and oppressed both in the family and society, then and now. Our attempt here is to trace the status of children from the Old Testament, especially regarding their worrying condition, while Jesus did not make any discrimination on them.

Children in the OT

God's greatest gift and guarantee of the covenant with Israel was that of children. Despite every other gift, Abraham felt at a complete loss without children (Gen 15:1–3). In the creation account, the first woman was called Eve, because she was "mother of all living" (Gen 3:20) and thus source of hope for the fallen first parents. Children were important in worship, prayer, and ritual (Ex. 13:8, 14; Deut. 4:9; 6:7). The Bible attaches special significance to the blessing of children, especially before the death of parents (Gen. 27, 48, 49).[1]

Despite this special esteem for children, they were the powerless ones on the bottom stair of Hebrew and other ancient societies. Tradition and custom allotted the most important place to older people (Prov. 16:31; Job 12:12). Parents had almost absolute authority over children, who were educated through strict obedience often enforced by severe physical punishment (Prov. 13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13).[2]

Children in the New Testament

In Mark's Gospel (10.13-16), we read that Jesus welcomes children despite his disciples' opposition. Responding to their group rebuke, Jesus says, 'whoever does not welcome God's kingdom like a child will not enter it' (10.15).

However, reports about children in Mark's Gospel indicate that its author views childhood as a untrustworthy stage of life, ranking a child's social status among the marginalized, poor, sick, powerless, dominated and exploited. We hear about daughters who die (5.21) or are demon possessed (7.25); a son seized by a spirit (9.17); children who are servants (9.35), rejected (10.13), left alone (10.29), betrayed (13.12), and who themselves betray (13.12).[3] Thus, to 'become like children' means being society's 'last' (9.35) — before they are granted entrance to God's kingdom.

Here there is an even stronger confrontation between Jesus and his disciples, who had rebuked those bringing children to him. Jesus is visibly *indignant* and publicly contradicts the disciples by saying, "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God" (10:14). Then Jesus states the necessity of receiving the kingdom as children (10:15). In this second text, children are not only "owners" of the kingdom but models of total childlike reception of Jesus' teaching.[4]

Like Mark, Matthew also constructs a literary frame around two stories about children in his discipleship section (18:1–5; 19:13–15). However, unlike Mark, there is no sharp contrast to the twelve, but a simple question addressed to Jesus about who is the greatest in the kingdom (18:1). Thus children will stand as a model for a much larger group in the church. The first image is that of conversion: "Unless you turn and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (18:3). The second is that of humility: "Whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (18:36).[5]

The Kingdom Belongs to Children (Mark 10:13–14, 16)

Jesus held that children have a share in the kingdom of God. This is clear in Mark 10:13–14, 16. In this episode Jesus rebuked the disciples, welcomes the children and, as a sign of blessing, lays his hands upon them. This clearly tells that Jesus affirmed that the kingdom of God and children are closely connected. They are the citizens of the kingdom.[6]

Receiving the Kingdom as a Child

Jesus taught that the kingdom of God was to be received "as a child" (Mk 10:15 par. Mt 18:3 and Lk 18:17). Here, Jesus makes the child the model for receiving or entering the kingdom. Many suggestions have been made as to how the child is a model. For Matthew it meant humility (18:4). But the very quality of the saying as metaphor suggests that a variety of meanings is possible and legitimate.[7]

Who is the greatest according to Jesus' teaching? The lowly, the humble, those who, even adults, accept for themselves the low status of children are the greatest of all. In fact, adult are striving for power and position and aspire. In contrast to this, Jesus' teaching is that those who are humble like children will participate in the kingdom of God.

In this passage, Jesus instructs the community of disciples, and especially those who exercise leadership within it. Genuine leadership in the Christian community is marked by humility, with the young child as model. Moreover, community leaders will not exercise power over helpless children but act in humility toward them, knowing that hospitality shown to a young child is shown to Jesus as well.[8]

Welcoming Little Children

Jesus placed special importance on receiving with kindness and hospitality the least important members of society: children.[9] Jesus' teaching here plays a vital role in which the disciples approach the kingdom but 'will not enter it.' In other words, in as much as they reject children and bar them from accessing Jesus, the disciples themselves will be denied access to the kingdom.[10] Thus, welcoming the low and insignificant people 'such as children' reveals the theological agendas of the disciples and of Jesus. 'Whoever' acts like the disciples in the story rejects a kingdom serving the marginalized. 'Whoever' acts like Jesus shares his vision of God's Kingdom.[11] Service to the down trodden, marginalized and the oppressed means accepting God the creator. In the new community of Jesus, the weak and the powerless do have privileges.

Endnotes

1 Joseph A. Grassi, "Child, Children," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992).
2 Grassi, "Child, children," *ABD.*
3 Peter Spitaler, "Welcoming a Child as a Metaphor for Welcoming God's Kingdom: A Close Reading of Mark 10.13-16," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 31 no. 4 (2009): 424.
4 Grassi, "Child, children," *ABD.*
5 Grassi, "Child, children," *ABD.*
6 Stephan C. Barton, "Child, Children," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 101.
7 Barton, "Child, children," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 101.
8 John T. Carroll, "Children in the Bible," *Interpretation* 55, no. 2 (April 2001): 130.
9 Barton, 101.
10 Spitaler, "Welcoming a Child as a Metaphor" *JSNT,* 437.
11 Spitaler, "Welcoming a Child as a Metaphor" *JSNT,* 440.

CHAPTER 24

Community Discipline and the Question of Power in the New Community

The Jesus community has new understanding within it. It is very much different from the general understanding of the existing social set up and government structure. Jesus' interpretation of authority and discipline is diverse from the then set up. This is discussed in Mt. 18:15-20; Mk. 10:42-45 and Mt. 23:1-12.

Discipline within the Community

In Mt. 18:15-20, the conduct of disciple toward disciple has been dealt with in general terms. In this pericope we see church discipline pragmatically at work, the authority once again of those in positions of leadership, and the promise of the continued presence of Jesus in his gathered community.[1]

This pericope is in the form of specific community regulations where one member has sinned against another. The following outline can be suggested:

(1) Procedure of discipline in cases of specific offense (v. 15a), further divided into

(a) A private meeting (v. 15b–d),

(b) A meeting with two or three others, with OT basis (v. 16), and

(c) Public exposure and ostracizing (v. 17);

(2) Statement of the authority behind such discipline (v. 18);

(3) The answer to prayer in such matters (v. 19); and

(4) The presence of Jesus in such circumstances (v. 20).[2]

When a member of the community has been sinned against, that person is to go to the other person and "rebuke" him or her. The meaning here is not to scold someone or to abuse them verbally for their conduct

but rather to bring the offensive matter to their attention in the hope that they will repent of their actions and be restored to the community.[3]

A premise basic to this pericope is the importance of personal relationships between members of the community. Just as it is important not to cause any of "these little ones" to stumble, so it is important that one not boldly sin against another. Accordingly, Jesus outlines a procedure for cases where one sins in this way.[4] So, the Jesus community is built on love. In case of sin or offence, there is no curse but constructive 'rebuke' on that person(s). It is an uplifting community. It is a saving community.

Service to Others

Jesus did not blindly oppose government but argued against the hierarchy and authoritarianism in which the subjects are ruled by the authorities. In Mk. 10:42-45, Jesus fought against the governance of the Gentile in which the rulers are lording over their people. They are in fact, tyrants. They are the oppressors. Since the devil is in control of the power structures, the stronger and the richer claim power and authority and begin to misuse the authority. As a result, there is hierarchy and oppression of the lower by the upper. They cannot give up their love of power and authority. They rather oppressed the weaker sections of the society in order to consolidate their position. There is a fight for rank and authority to the extent of neglecting the mass of people. They want to be served but they have no tendency to serve.

This kind of kingdom is experienced in India and everywhere. Meanwhile, Jesus calls for a new kingdom in which there is humility and service to others. In the new community of Jesus, the greatest should be the least or slaves of all. Jesus manifested that he came not to be served but to serve and give his life a ransom for many. Jesus gave himself for others. The rule of this new community is not through power or might but service to others just as Jesus himself did in his earthly ministry.

Humility

Jesus respects the position of the Scribes and Pharisees as interpreters of the Law of Moses. Yet for Matthew Jesus alone is the true interpreter of Moses, and he is therefore, the one rabbi, teacher, and tutor. Jesus faults them particularly for their desire to impress others and their love of prestige and position. Such dangers also threaten Christians, and Jesus thus warns his disciples. They are to avoid titles that would set them apart from, and above, others in the community of faith.[5] Jesus condemned the Pharisees because they claimed the best position and privileges as a right. They loved the highest dignities in the society. Jesus renounced this love of power and positions. He rather concluded that all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted (Mt. 23:12).

Endnotes

1 Donald A. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 14-28*, vol. 33b (Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1998).
2 Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 14-28*.
3 Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 14-28*.
4 Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 14-28*.
5 Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 14-28*.

CHAPTER 25

Discipleship as Following the Way to the Cross

Jesus taught that discipleship is not an easy way. Even when some people asked him that they wanted to follow him Jesus answered that the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head (Mt. 8:20). Jesus also said to someone who wanted to follow him, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God,” (Luke 9:62). The cost of discipleship is very dear according to Jesus.

The cost of discipleship is best seen in the Gospel according to Luke. Luke puts forth the discipleship in several ways:

Followers on the Way

Following Jesus is synonymous with discipleship, but Luke depicts the phenomenon in a unique manner: the disciples of Jesus are followers on the Way. In Luke Jerusalem is the center, and he projected Jesus as travelling on the road to Jerusalem for the passion with the disciples traveling along with him (9:57). For Luke, salvation itself is “the way”, a pattern of life revealed by God. This idea of salvation as a “way” leads in time to calling the Christian community “the Way” (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22), an early designation or title for the organized community of disciples, which eventually is known as “the church.” From the Lukan perspective, disciples must enter into and stride along that Way in the footsteps of their Master.

Entrance to the Way

Both in his Gospel and the Acts, Luke emphasizes that entrance into the Way of salvation and discipleship is found through faith alone (7:50;

8:48; 17:19; cf. Acts 10:43; 13:38–39; 16:31). More so than the other Evangelists, Luke stresses that true faith is characterized by "counting the cost," both positively and negatively, of what the life of discipleship entails. To count the cost negatively means to recognize that one enters into the life of discipleship through detachment from all other allegiances and through giving total allegiance to Jesus as Master. It costs to lose family, passion, dream, riches etc. for the sake of Jesus.

To count the cost positively means to recognize that love for God—undivided loyalty to him—is at the center of faith. Jesus demands unreserved love and loyalty to him rather than the worldly pleasures and anything that distracts them from Jesus.

Traveling along the Way

Discipleship begins upon entering the Way of salvation; it advances as one travels along the Way. Luke specifies that self-denial, taking up the cross and following Jesus not only characterizes entrance into the Way but life on the Way. With the addition of "each day" to the cross-bearing proclamation, the Lukan Jesus calls for daily self-denial, daily bearing one's cross and daily following in the footsteps of the Master (cf. 9:23; Mk 8:34). Life on the Way involves being doers of the Word (11:27–28), because not all who are walking on the Way truly belong to the Way. It demands the all of the believers.

CHAPTER 26

Jesus' Teaching on Discipleship: Sermon on the Mount

Introduction

The name "Sermon on the Mount" designates the first programmatic speech Jesus delivered according to the gospel of Matthew (5:3–7:27). The name Sermon on the Mount was used by Augustine (354–430 CE).[1] The sermon is presented in Matthew as a single discourse on one specific occasion. However, most scholars hold that the Sermon is not a single sermon or discourse but a compilation of isolated sayings.[2] It can be said that the Sermon on the Mount is a series of ethical teaching. Due to this, it has been taken up by different preachers and scholars and interpret it in different ways. Some of them are discussed below.

Interpretations of the Sermon on the Mount

1) Perfectionist Legalism

According to this view just as God demanded all human beings to follow the Law of Moses perfectly, Jesus also demands human beings to follow his teachings on the Sermon on the Mount. However, Jesus knew well that no one can completely follow this, but he expects human beings to seriously attempt to attain part of them.[3]

2) Impossible Ideal

This view, especially Lutherans, say that the instructions found in the Sermon on the Mount is an impossible ideal. They say that Jesus made demands which human could never possibly fulfill completely; but that as human beings realized their impotence, they would come to appreciate the saving love of God.[4] Luther said that we are not able to fulfill them properly out of our own strength, but we must always crawl to Christ.

3) Interim Ethics

Johannes Weiss[5] and Albert Schweitzer proposed this view. In this view Jesus believed that the end was at hand. Thus, this sermon or teaching is not for a long term because the end would come soon. It is meant for the interval, that is, between his absence and the second coming of Jesus. Since this kind of teaching had never been had in the past history and since it would not be needed when the human society is replaced by the Kingdom of God in future, this ethical teaching is meant for human beings only for some period of time.[6]

There are some elements of truth in all these three views. However, they are misleading if we take them singly. The mistake in all these three is that each one claims to be final and exclusive as an interpretation.

4) Discontinuity between the Old and the New Testament

Early church Fathers such as St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas believed that Jesus gave the new law to the new age. The Mosaic Law is the lesser law given by God through Moses, and they were bound by fear. Meanwhile, the greater law is now given through His Son, Jesus in his sermon on the mount. The old law is ended and the new law is instructed now. [7]

5) Continuity between the Old and the New Testament

Reformers Martin Luther, Zwingli and Calvin wrote extensively on the Sermon. They all insisted that Matthew 5–7 represents the true interpretation of the Law of Moses, which was not understood in Judaism. They interpreted that this "Law of Christ" is the continuation of the "Law of Moses" that the Law of Moses is made perfect by the Law of Christ. On the whole they emphasized the continuity between the "Law of Christ" and the "Law of Moses" more than their Catholic opponents.[8]

6) Literal Interpretation

One of the religious sects, Anabaptists[9] claimed that the Sermon on the Mount should be interpreted literally and that Christians should therefore never use violence (Mt 5:39), never swear oaths (Mt 5:34) and never hold office as a judge or ruler (Mt 7:1). Because of this, they kept themselves aloof from the secular government completely.[10] Russian novelist and social reformer, Leo Tolstoy resolved the Sermon on the Mount into five commandments: suppression of all anger, chastity, no oaths, nonresistance, and unreserved love of enemies. He said that if human literally obeys them, the existing evils of society would vanish.[11]

Evaluation

The Sermon on the Mount is not to be taken as a new law over against the old Mosaic Law, but as a description of the life and conduct of those who have entered the kingdom of God. It is also not for social reform nor for the establishment of the utopia/ideal state but it is a description of the divine transformation effected within the heart and life of individuals who open themselves to the grace of God. It is neither an impractical ideal nor a fully attainable possibility. However, it is attainable for those have entered into the kingdom of God.

The 'impossible ideal' view is attractive at first sight, but we have to know that even the Old Testament makes clear that salvation derives not from human merit but from God. So also is in Jesus' teaching that there is not a sing sentence in the Sermon on the Mount itself which suggests that Jesus was putting forward an impossible ideal. On the contrary, he clearly expects form his disciples the most rigorous obedience. The Sermon on the Mount can be interpreted as the continuation of the Old Testament law with a new dimension: the long-expected reign of God is dawning with the presence of Jesus, and therefore has a new urgency.[12]

The conduct of the life of those who have entered the kingdom of God does not mean that one cannot apply the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount. This is the life that Jesus is teaching all human beings for their daily lives. As the Christian is approaching perfection, one has to follow this instruction all the time till one has complete transformation from God.

Endnotes

1 Hans Dieter Betz, "Sermon on the Mount/Plain," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992).

2 William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of Matthew*, vol.1 (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, [1956], 2001), 87.

3 Joachim Jeremias, in his Ethel M. Wood Lectures before the University of London, *The Sermon of the Mount,* 1961, 9. Quoted in William Foxwell Albright, *The Anchor Bible: Matthew* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1971), 51.

4 Albright, *Matthew: AB,* 51.

5 In his *Die Predigt vom Reichen Gottes,* Tubingen, 1892; quoted by Albright, *Matthew: AB*, 51.

6 Robert H. Mounce, "Sermon on the Mount," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, ed. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 415.

7 Thomas Aquinas accepted the discontinuity but without conceding that latter contradicted or abrogated the former. Graham N. Stanton, "Sermon on the Mount/Plain," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot

McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 738.

[8] Stanton, 738.

[9] Anabaptists were religious sects that arose in Europe, particularly in Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland, during the Reformation, 16th century. The name means "one who baptizes again"; it refers to the Anabaptists' practice of adult baptism, even of people who had been baptized in infancy. In the early 1520s, several religious leaders began to preach against Church and social practices in Switzerland, Germany, and Austria. Among them were the Zurich-born Konrad Grebel, the Bavarian Hans Denck, and the German Balthasar Hubmaier. Somewhat younger than Zwingli and Luther, they were caught up in the wars of the peasants and of the empire under the Habsburgs. Known as the Brethren or the Swiss Brethren, they believed the Bible negated the practice of infant baptism and the celebration of the Mass. Instead, Anabaptists insisted on believer's baptism and a memorial Lord's Supper. Because they rejected the hierarchy of the Church and the authority of civil bodies in religious matters, they were accused of sedition and heresy, persecuted, and often martyred. "Anabaptists." *Microsoft® Encarta®* 2006 [CD]. Microsoft Corporation, 2005.

[10] Stanton, 738.

[11] G. Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (1960), 222. Quoted in Mounce, "Sermon on the Mount," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia,* vol. 4, 414.

[12] Albright, *Matthew: AB,* 52f.

CHAPTER 27

The Lord's Prayer

Introduction

The Lord's Prayer is the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples as a model. It occurs in two forms; one in Mt. 6:9-13 and the other is in Lk. 11:2-4. The Lord's Prayer was used extensively in the early church. It appeared in the Didakhe (c. 2nd century CE). It was assumed that the prayer was to be used by baptized believers only. It was used privately as well as publicly.[1]

It is interpreted eschatologically that the disciples were longing for and preparing for the consummation of God's Kingdom. However, the early Christians have also used the Lord's Prayer throughout the centuries without a specifically eschatological intention. This suggests that it also has a daily concern. Thus, we can say that it has both eschatological as well as everyday life concern.[2]

Content

The Lord's Prayer can be divided into three parts: address, 'you' or 'thou' petition, which consists of God's honour and kingdom; and 'we' petitions, which relate to the needs of the petitioners.

1) Address

God is addressed as 'our Father who art in heaven' in Matthew. The use of 'Father' to address God was not common among the Jews before Jesus. Jesus used it in a unique way mentioning the special relationship between God and believers. God is not only the personal father of Jesus but also the father of all believers through Jesus.

Luke uses the simple form 'Father' (without the phrase *who art in heaven*). It tends to mean intimate relationship between God and

believers just as little children call their fathers as 'daddy' (abba).[3]

2) 'Thou' Petitions

There are three petitions in the 'thou' petitions:

a) Hallowed be Thy Name

In the biblical times name was very closely identified with the person. To 'hallow' God's name (glorify the name of God) is to acknowledge what God actually is. 'To hallow God's name' is to acknowledge that God is indeed holy.

b) Thy Kingdom Come

The mission of Jesus and his main teaching/message is the Kingdom of God. Jesus worked earnestly to establish the Kingdom of God. It was his will to establish the sovereignty/rule of God here on earth. God's kingdom has already been introduced with the coming of Jesus and in his ministry during his lifetime, and believers have already been brought into the Kingdom of God from the dominion of darkness. But its finality/ consummation still lies in the future. Jesus taught his disciples to pray for its fulfillment.

c) Thy will be Done, on Earth as It Is in Heaven

The will of God is the will of Jesus. Jesus' zeal is to actualize the will of God on earth as it is actualized in heaven.

3) 'We' Petition

There are four 'we' petitions:

a) Give Us This Day/Today Our Daily Bread

Matthew and Luke have differences in this petition. Matthew used past tense to mean 'give'. He also used 'today or this day.' But Luke used present tense to say 'give,' suggesting repeated or continuous action. He also used 'each day.' Luke seems to refer to the supply of needs day by day. He may also mean praying for the daily needs frequently.

b) And Forgive Us Our Debts, As We Also Have Forgiven Our Debtors

Jesus emphasized forgiving others in this petition. Jesus said that we should have right mind and right attitude when we approach God. Jesus also said (Mt. 18:21-35) that just as God forgives one who has an immense debt, one should also forgive others who have a very small debt by comparison.

c) And Lead Us Not into Temptation

This prayer is a request so that God would prevent us from falling into temptations. Temptation here does not mean enticement to sin; rather, it has a neutral meaning of 'test' or 'testing.' Some scholars[4] interpreted that this temptation/test refers to the final great test, the eschatological time of tribulation when the final battle is fought between God and Satan.

However, we have to know that the petition relates to a testing that might result us in defection and sin. The idea here is not merely of entering temptation, but of going 'inside' it and falling and succumbing to it. It also refers to being kept not 'from' but 'during' a time of testing.

d) But Deliver Us from Evil

This is found only in Matthew. It refers to the 'evil one.' It is a prayer to God for deliverance from Satan. The idea behind this is a war between the people of God and the evil spirits under the leadership of Satan.

Doxology

The doxology, "For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever" is lacking entirely in Luke and also in the earliest manuscript of Matthew. It is generally thought to have been added later for liturgical reasons.[5]

Endnotes

1 W. L. Liefeld, "Lord's Supper," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 163.

2 R. T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary (Leicester and Grand Rapids: InterVarsity Press and William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 133.

3 Liefeld, "Lord's Supper," 161.

4 R. E. Brown, *New Testament Essays,* 315-317; Joachim Jeremias, *Prayers of Jesus,* 105.

5 Cf. Bruce M. Metzger, *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London and New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), 16f.

CHAPTER 28

Jesus' Teaching of Mission as Proclaiming and Partaking in Liberation: Nazareth Manifesto (Lk. 4:16-20)

Introduction

The Lucan passage (Lk. 4:18-21) in which Jesus pronounced the manifesto of his ministry basing on Is. 61:1, 2 is called the Nazareth Manifesto. We can also call that this is Jesus' inaugural speech for his ministry. After Jesus was filled with the power of the Spirit, he returned to Galilee and his home town, Nazareth. He decided to begin his mission from there. People of this region were considered religiously and culturally backward. In fact, Galilee was considered a socio-culturally backward region, and in addition to this, nothing good was supposed to come from such a less village like Nazareth.

Luke is writing in the context of a situation where the rich and the poor no longer are in good terms with one another. The consequence is a social tension between the haves and the have-nots. Luke understood the poor, the maimed, the blind and the lame in a socio-economic sense. They refer to the poorest of the poor in Luke's Hellenistic community. They are not only physically poor, but they are also poor in a social sense. In fact, the rich looked down upon the poor.[1]

The Social Setting of Luke's Greco-Roman World

Social Classes

The main mass of the people can broadly be classified into two classes:

1) The upper classes

the Roman aristocracy can be divided into three categories:

a) the Senatorial aristocracy,

b) the Equestrian order and

c) the Local bureaucracies.

The first two, senatorial and equestrian orders were the higher most, comprising the upper and lower strata of the Roman nobility. The local bureaucracies consisted of the decurions.[2] Only a tiny percentage of the population was included within these orders.[3]

2) The Lower Classes

The lower class comprised of the teachers,[4] petty bourgeoisie,[5] plebs,[6] freedmen,[7] peasants[8] and slaves.[9]

The Poor in Luke and its Social Setting

Out of the many proposals regarding the place of writing,[10] Kümmel pointed the uncertainty and cautiously concluded that the Third Gospel was surely written outside Palestine.[11] In addition to this assumption, Esler assumed that Luke-Acts was written in a city of the Roman Empire, probably in one of its eastern provinces.[12] If this is correct, the Lucan 'poor' are the urban poor, who had two basic needs: food and shelter. The most important food at that time was bread baked from wheat. Their problem was that they were often hired on a daily basis and failure to obtain work meant that the laborer and his family went hungry the next day. For the urban poor, existence was a day-by-day struggle to obtain enough food to live, and hunger was an ever-threatening reality.[13]

The miseries that the Lucan poor suffered were extreme forms of economic, social and political deprivation. For them, life was a very grim business. Ill-fed, housed in slums or not at all, ravaged by sickness, precluded from all access to social prestige and power over their own destinies, and having virtually no hope of improvement in their condition. They went through life with under the overlordship of the elite.[14] Takatemjen listed the explicit references to the poor in Luke such as i) widow of Zarephath (Lk. 4:18f); ii) other women and widows (Lk. 1:46-55; 7:12; 21:2, 3; Acts 6:1f.); iii) the infirm and the sick (4:18f.; 4:40f; 6:17-19; 18:35-43 etc.).[15]

When Jesus began his ministry, he publicly announced his agenda which was kept hidden. He then publicly announced that he was going to begin his work with four groups of people. They were the **poor**, the **captives**, the **blind** and the **oppressed**. Jesus came face to face with these four segments of human society, which were the actual realities of people living in the region of Galilee at that time.

The Four Targeted Groups of Jesus' Manifesto

From the sociological studies of Lucan context we come to know that the poor and sufferers targeted in the Nazareth Manifesto are really poor and really sufferers. They are categorized as under:

1) The Poor

The term poor, especially in Luke, covers a vast meaning. They can be classified us under:

a) Economically Poor

They were the widows, orphans who depended on others for their welfare and livelihood. They constituted a third economic class positioned somewhere between the free man and the slave. They were suffering destitution and hunger. The 'poor' in Luke are the urban poor, who had two basic needs: food and shelter. The most important food at that time was bread baked from wheat. Their problem was that they were often hired on a daily basis and failure to obtain work meant that the laborer and his family went hungry the next day.[16] They suffered extreme forms of economic, social and political deprivation. For them, life was a very grim business. Apart from that, they lived in slums without having proper shelter. They could have no social prestige. They were having virtually no hope of improvement in their condition.[17]

b) Socially Poor

The biblical word 'poor' seem to mean more than economic poverty but also destitution from the society. As they are too poor, they have no importance in the society. They were despised by others. This group consists of the beggars. They were completely dependent on others. Socially poor does not necessarily mean that they are poor economically and materially. So, this group can also consist of the tax collectors and the prostitutes. They were despised and humiliated by the society due to their profession. They were the sinners. Therefore, they did not want to have fellowship with them. They did not want to befriend them. They were socially sidelined and socially poor.

c) Physically Poor

They are the physically disabled, the maimed, the blind and the lame. This can be interpreted as the indication of the truly poor in the society. They are poor socio-economically. They refer to the poorest of the poor in Luke's Hellenistic community. They are not only physically poor, but they are also poor in a social sense. The rich looked down upon them and have no space in the society, among the rich.

These *poor* were *really poor*. They were economically poor, physically disabled, socially despised and were virtually excluded from the society from all forms of privileges. In the meantime, it included not only the economically poor but also poor in other ways, that is, physically weak, socially outcast and sinners in general. They are the lowest class of the society. They were under the tyranny of the rich oppressors. They really suffered the extreme misery of life. This group is exactly same with the Dalits, Adivasi, tribals, homeless, street dwellers, beggars, rag-pickers, out-castes, women etc. in India who suffer poverty and misery of life. They are the really poor in India. Jesus pronounced that he has brought good news for them. They are the first people who receive Jesus' favor.

2) Captives

The second targeted group is the captives. To be precise, *the captives* and *the oppressed* are not mentioned again in Luke and no specific ministry to them is recorded. Captives here can mean the following:

a) They were the socio-economic captives in terms of debts from the city treasury because they were the citizens of Hellenistic cities. So, Jesus proclaimed the release of these captives from the debt.

b) They were slaves under the bondage of sin. Releasing the captives here means forgiveness from sin. So, Jesus announced that they will be freed from the power of the devil.

c) The captivity referred to here is evidently moral and spiritual. They were a mixed group of people, both rich and poor or dominant and dominated. The captives here are not literally captives as slaves, but those who were captives of ideologies and of various kinds of structures. The captives here are under the bondage of religious, cultural, economic, social and political fetters.

India is a multi religious, cultural, economic, social and political country. Each of the followers of religions is bound by our traditions and rites. Our fanatic religious bigotry enslaves and prevents us from working for the good of others and for the country. Rather, we are aggressive to other faiths. Similarly, cultural, economic and social structures create a dividing wall between the rich and the poor, higher and lower class or caste in India causing the poor suffer. The powerful class people do not want to crush the dividing wall so that they will enjoy lording over the poor and manipulate the society. Lust for power and wealth in the political area also captivates many people. Jesus tries to break this stumbling block and wants to set these captives, both the dominant and the dominated people free.

3) Blind

The third group is the blind. Elsewhere in Luke the blind are the physically and really blind (14:13) and Jesus heals them (7:21, 22; 18:35). Begging was the only way of earning livelihood for the blind people in those days. But Jesus promised in his manifesto that they shall recover their sight. This is literally fulfilled in the course of his ministry.

However, the blind does not only refer to the physical blindness, but also whose mind and heart are closed to truth and values. It also refers to spiritual sight. It is known that Jesus' ministry was not only about physical healing. The people whom Jesus regarded as most blind were not those physically blind but those who cannot see the work of God through him. The great gift of Jesus was that he opened human's eyes not only to the wonder and majesty but to the nearness of God.

4) Oppressed

The fourth group of people referred to in the manifesto is *the oppressed* whom Jesus said he would set free. The oppressed groups mentioned above such as Dalits, Adivasi, tribals, homeless, street dwellers, beggars, rag-pickers, out-castes, women etc. in our country are the subjects here too because they are oppressed in all areas of life-religious, social, economic and political fields.

The Poor in Indian Context

It is known to us that the mass of the Indian society comprises of the poor people. About two thirds of the population lives below or just above the poverty line. Economic inequality is widespread in the society. A small group of the rich people controls over the whole wealth of the country for their selfish purposes and enjoyments, putting the majority of the people in poverty and destitution. In this context, the time of God's kingdom, God's intervention into history has taken place in Jesus. Jesus will liberate all people from all types of poverty and oppression. For the poor in India, the good news comes in the form of daily bread, education, medical care, awareness of one's dignity and acceptance of one another with fraternal care and dignity.[18]

Assessment

The Nazareth Manifesto of Jesus pictures the transformation of the whole human society. It covers the whole society including the uppermost class and the lowest class of the society. Jesus wants to liberate those who are poor, captives and blind due to the structural set up of the society, religion and culture. Although the rich and the dominant people are also captivated today, yet Jesus' emphasis is on the poor, weak, physically maimed and socially downtrodden, who suffer most from oppressions and misery of life.

Jesus also announced the jubilee year 'the year of the Lord's favor' that will not only involve radical economic changes, but also radical transformation in the cultural, social and political structures of human society. The jubilee year is for all people, particularly for the poor, captives, blind and oppressed. Jesus finally concluded his manifesto by saying that the scripture has been fulfilled. So, Jesus said that the freedom of the poor, captives, blind and oppressed began now. Jesus is the liberator of all these sufferers. One has to know that Jesus takes the side of the poor.

As the co-workers of Jesus, the church as a whole and individual believers have duty to continue and put Jesus' Manifesto into practice so that the poor, captives, blind and oppressed people can be set free and delivered. It should be carried out not only in terms of words but with practical life.

Endnotes

1 Takatemjen, *The Banquet Is Ready: Rich and Poor in the Parables of Luke* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2003), 105-109.

2 Decurion is an officer in command of ten soldiers in ancient Rome.

3 Takatemjen, 41. For detail, see 41-48.

4 They were regarded with some respect even though they were not wealthy. Their education and rhetoric skill gave them some status and rank among the populace. Philosophers and religious leaders also seemed to have been given the same honour or status as that to the teachers. Cf. Takatemjen, *The Banquet is Ready,* 44.

5 They were small landowners, craftsmen, shopkeepers and artisans like the shoemakers, builders, dyers, professionals like doctors, ordinary soldiers, salaried government clerks and minor municipal officials. Takatemjen, *The Banquet is Ready,* 44.

6 They were the lower-class freeborn citizens. They were the really poor who had no property and supported themselves by working at the docks, in construction or on farms. Takatemjen, *The Banquet is Ready,* 44.

7 They were the slaves who had been released through the process of manumission. A. M. Duff, *Freedmen in the Early Roman Empire* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1958), 12-35, quoted in Takatemjen, *The Banquet is Ready,* 45. A majority of them were becoming in artisans, shopkeepers, agents and craftsmen.

8 Peasants and small farmers made up the majority of the population who were estimated to be 30% of the population. They provided the basic food need of the empire, however, they were often oppressed brutally by their masters. Cf. F. C. Grant, *The Economic Background of the Gospels* (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), 105f. They had to pay heavy taxes and since most of them were tenants, they had to pay very high rent to the absentee landowners.

[9] They were at the bottom of the socio-economic pyramid. Different types of slaves were there such as a) slaves of the emperor's household; b) slaves of the ranches and the mines; c) slaves of the cultured Romans. For detail, see Takatemjen, *The Banquet is Ready,* 46-47.

[10] Scholars conjectured about Caesarea (Michel, Klijn), Achaea (T. W. Manson), the Decapolis (Koh), Rome (Michaelis, Geldenhuys, Hastings etc.), cf. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* 106.

[11] Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament,* 106.

[12] Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts*, 169.

[13] In the first century CE there was no general system of wheat-distribution in the cities of the roman East. Rome, of course, did have a public corn-distribution system. However, it was limited to a fixed number of roman citizens who were residents of the capital. Resident foreigners, such as Jewish expatriates were ineligible. Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts*, 175.

[14] Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts*, 179.

[15] Takatemjen, *The Banquet is Ready,* 59f.

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[17] Esler, 179.

[18] M. V. Abraham, "Good News to the Poor in Luke's Gospel," *Bible Bashyam: An Indian Biblical Quarterly* XIV, no. 1-2 (March-June 1988): 76.

CHAPTER 29

Jesus' Mission is the Confrontation/ Conflict with Socio-religio-political Powers

Introduction

The Fourth Gospel says that the light shone in the darkness, but the darkness did not know it. So, the ministry of Jesus, from the beginning, is a ministry of conflict with the demonic forces. The devil took control over all aspects of life, even to the extent of religious life. Since the work of Jesus was to overcome the demonic kingdom and to establish the Kingdom of God, the two forces encountered each other in every aspect of life. As a result, Jesus did not leave any part of life untouched. He counteracted the work of the devil directly and indirectly by means of healing and casting demons from the demon possessed. He challenged and argued against the religious authorities, conflicted against the existing culture and political authorities. His conflicting ministry can be summarized as follows:

1) Direct Conflict of the Devil's Work

As Jesus cast out the demons, he was accused of as having Beelzebul. Jesus used two parallel illustrations to explain that he opposed against the devil, rather than having Beelzebul (Mark 3:23-27). He portrayed the macro-("kingdom") and micro-("household") political and social units. Having Beelzebul and casting out the demons will mean civil war and domestic conflict that means fighting against oneself or Satan standing against himself.[1] He straightforwardly professed that he was in conflict with the devilish work.

In Mark 3:23-27 (par. Mt. 12:28ff.), Jesus said that the strong man was tied up and his house was plundered. Jesus used this parable to mean the opposing force of the Kingdom of God against the kingdom of

the devil. In this parable, certain things are transparent: "strong man" stands for Satan; his "possessions" represents those possessed; the "binding" or "tying up" of the "strong man" takes place in Jesus' ministry (Jesus defeated Satan); and the "plundering" indicates Jesus' own exorcisms of those "possessed." Consequently, this saying makes clear the ultimate character of Jesus' ministry of exorcism that Satan is being "bound" or having "met his end" and Jesus set his captives free.[2]

In Matthew 12:28, Jesus also said, "But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you" (par. Lk. 11:20, by the finger of God). With this saying, Jesus cast out the demons and also proclaimed that the kingdom of God has come. Thus, exorcism is the ministry of Jesus in order to conflict against the demonic, as well as the establishment of the kingdom of God. Similarly, out of about 26 cases of individual healing accounts in the Gospels, Jesus' focus was not only healing the physical ailment, but the forgiveness of sin. This indicates that Jesus, by healing, overcame the power of evil and sin.

2) Jesus Conflicted Against the Religion and the Religious Authorities

Two outstanding conflicts made by Jesus over against the religious authorities and traditions are applicable here:

a) Violation of Sabbath Law

When Jesus healed on Sabbath, not one of them suffered from life-threatening sickness who cannot wait for the next day (Mk. 3:1–6; Lk. 13:10–17; 14:1–6). According to the Jewish law, he should not have to heal on the Sabbath. Jesus uncovered the fallacy of their legalism. "Doing good" for his opponents meant keeping the Sabbath, and keeping the Sabbath meant not healing the cripple.[3] When Jesus healed them in the Sabbath day, the synagogue leader angrily scolded them to come on the other six days and get healed but not on Sabbath. They blindly wanted to observe Sabbath that they did not have compassion on their fellow human who suffered. Jesus intentionally violated Sabbath by healing the sick. He challenged the existing religion and its understanding because the way they worshipped God and the observation of the Sabbath were not from divine, but from human. He conflicted against the blind religion which was influenced by the demonic power and instead established the kingdom of God in which God is worshipped from within.

b) Woe Pronouncement

Jesus also pronounced 'woe' to the religious leaders and authorities:

Pharisees, Scribes and lawyers (Mt. 23:13-29; Lk. 11:42-52). The Pharisees were zealous to make converts (their ministry), they fulfilled the regulations for purity extraordinarily by giving tithe and ritual purification (ritual washing their hands etc.). They were outwardly good and pious, but Jesus pronounced woe to them and called them hypocrites because they were unclean within whereas inward cleanliness is what God demands. The scribes were the theologians who wanted respect, and strived for places of honour. They relied on their theological knowledge; they knew and preached the will of God, but they did not fulfill it. In other words, the religious leaders were also under the direct influence of the devil, and their works were condemned by Jesus.

3) Jesus Conflicted Against the Existing Culture

The Jews before and during the time of Jesus practiced patriarchal cultural set up, in which men oppressed women. Women were regarded as properties. In today's word, we can say that men spoiled the women's life and violated their rights. This set up was legitimized both by society and religion. Amidst this context, Jesus did not reject women as the society did. He takes the side of the poor and oppressed women always. He even protected the prostitute from the mob who tried to stone her. He not only protected her, but also counteracted against the people who thought themselves righteous by letting them know that they were the sinners. He was also the friend of the sinners, the publicans and the tax collectors. They were culturally and religiously estranged. But Jesus, in contrast to the existing culture, loved and kept accompany with them.

4) Jesus Conflicted Against the Political Authority

Some scholars have seen Jesus as revolutionary because he strongly challenged the existing politics of his own time. In the meantime, Jesus cannot be understood as blindly opposing the government. Jesus, although he is the son of God, he did pay the temple tax (Mt. 17:24-26). The two-drachma piece, that was paid by Jesus and Peter was approximately equal in value to the half-shekel collected annually from every Jew to support the temple (i.e., from males over twenty years of age; cf. Ex. 30:13–16; cf. 38:26; Neh. 10:32–33).[4] Matthew presented Jesus as a loyal Jew who pays the temple tax. Some scholars argued that this pericope concerns not the temple tax but Roman taxation. However, we can accept that this concerns not the paying of taxes to the state, i.e., the secular authorities, but a specifically religious tax for the maintenance of the temple and its ritual[5]. He acknowledged the temple government by collecting the tax.

Jesus clearly said that the tax has to be paid to the government (Mark 12:17-Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's). Jesus was not a revolutionary who tried to overthrow the Roman government. But neither did he put priority upon loyalty to secular government. He is a good citizen of a good government.

In the meantime, when he was warned to flee from Herod because he wanted to kill him, Jesus, who agreed to pay the tax, called Herod 'the fox' (Lk. 13:31-33). He outwardly spoke against him and decided to carry on his mission because Jesus did not have sin to fear the authorities. He did the right thing and wanted to save the sinners. Herod, because he was unjust, wanted to get rid of the righteous prophets who revealed his guilt. Jesus, though a good citizen, boldly fought against the evil of the political authority because it was his mission to counteract and correct the politics that was defiled by the devil. He also condemned the hierarchical and authoritarian form of government. Rather, he establish a government in which the leader is the slave of all (Mk. 10:42-44).

Endnotes

1 Guelich, *Word Biblical Commentary: Mark 1-8:26*. *WBC*, vol. 34a.
2 Guelich, *Word Biblical Commentary: Mark 1-8:26*. *WBC*, vol. 34a.
3 Guelich, *Word Biblical Commentary: Mark 1-8:26*. *WBC,* vol. 34a.
4 Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 14-28*.
5 Cf. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 14-28*.

CHAPTER 30

Mission as Experience and Promotion of Peace and Justice

Matthew is eager to record that Jesus sent his disciples first exclusively to the Jews. This exclusiveness can be interpreted that Christianity is not a different "religion" nor one intended primarily for the Gentiles, although Jews were quickly becoming a minority in the Church of Matthew's day. The mission to the Gentiles is, however, clearly anticipated and mandated for the salvation-history.[1]

In Jesus' teaching, teacher and disciple, master and servant, stand together because of their respective responsibility and allegiance. Jesus and his chosen disciples stand preeminently together. In the discourse of Mt. 10:5-15, Jesus is instructing his disciples to extend his ministry to Israel with the same words and deeds that characterized his own ministry, that is, with the good news of the fulfillment and the dawning of the kingdom. But if Jesus suffers hostility and rejection, so must his disciples be prepared for the same. Thus, almost by definition, with discipleship to Jesus and the witness of the gospel comes an unavoidable suffering.[2] Jesus sent them out to bring peace and justice rather than curse or counter attack over against the rejection or opposition.

Different Characteristics of Mission

The Wisdom of Serpents

In Egyptian symbolism (the serpents coiled about the throne of a king), serpent has threefold significance — 1) as the emblem of eternity, 2) as the representative of cleverness, and 3) as the

incarnation of evil. It is the second of these characteristics that Jesus here selects. Though Jesus never encourages deceit but mental alertness, keenness of observation, and liveliness of thought are valuable gifts even for Christian work. We should consecrate intelligence in the service of Christ. There is no virtue in dullness.

The Harmlessness of Doves

This is a negative quality. But it is not less important than the positive intelligence. A serpent-like subtlety of mind is the most dangerous faculty. It is valuable; but it is only safe when it is balanced by a dove-like gentleness of disposition. Mission and ministry should be carried out mindfully, keenly, lively but peacefully. This is especially essential in India as the absolute majority of the population is the followers of Hinduism.

They Were to Choose Pious Households

They must begin in each town or village with those who were most likely to listen to their message. A pious household would be a fit centre from which the good tidings might spread throughout the neighbourhood. There they should remain. They were not to wander from house to house in search of pleasant places; they were to be content to stay where God's providence had first directed them. Jesus instructed them not to force others though the messages they were about to preach was vitally important for everyone. Violation of others is not Jesus' intention. Further, searching physical comfort is foreign to Jesus' teaching.

They were to Bring the Message of Peace

"Peace be unto you!" was the common formula of Oriental salutation. Jesus would not have his servants neglect the ordinary courtesies of social life. It brings peace to the household that is worthy of peace. Words of blessing do no good to the unbelieving and the unworthy. But they are not lost; the blessing returns upon him who utters it in faith and love. Christian love is very precious; every deed and word and thought of love is registered in heaven; not one is lost. Jesus' intention was to proclaim the goodnews in peace because he is the prince of peace. There is peace in the community of Jesus.

Sheep into the Midst of Wolves

Jesus sent out his disciples like the sheep into the midst of wolves.

a) The sheep is an emblem of *innocence.* The Christian is innocent, being justified in the blood of Christ. He is, moreover, sanctified by the Spirit of Christ.

b) The sheep is also an emblem of *patience.* The Christian has his/her *perfect* Example in Christ. The "Lamb without spot or blemish;" the "Lamb of God." Brought "as a lamb to the slaughter," and "as a sheep before her shearers."

Though he knows he has been sent among wolves, in each case the messenger is to assume that there will be an openness to his visit and his message in each house he approaches. Here the greeting of peace takes on a special meaning as these messengers come with the message of the salvation of the kingdom of God. One should not be grudging about the bestowal of the messianic peace: it will not stay where it is not appreciated. But if it does stay then the messenger has, in a sense, reproduced himself.[3]

Endnotes

1 Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 1-13*.
2 Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 1-13*.
3 Nolland, *Word Biblical Commentary: Luke 9:21-18:34*. *Word Biblical Commentary, Luke 9:21-18:34*.

CHAPTER 31

Jesus' Teaching on Future Eschatology: the Hope of a New Creation

Jesus foretold that there will be a lot of change in the future. The end time will come and then the Son of Man will come in clouds with great power and glory, to gather his elects from the four winds of the earth (Mk. 13:26, 27). But this end time and the last judgment is preceded by hardships. It can be described as follows:

Afflictions are Foretold

1) ***National disaster.*** It was upon the whole nation, and especially upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the upper and ruling classes, that the retribution fell.
2) ***Temple desecration.*** This is probably what is designated as "the abomination of desolation." It will also be destroyed.
3) ***Religious deception.*** The false messiah will come trying to deceive others. They will be performing even some signs and omens to lead astray others.
4) ***Individual sufferings***. Several circumstances here predicted, especially the distress in which miserable mothers should be involved (v. 17), serve to deepen and darken the tone of this picture of calamity.

The Certainty of Christ's Coming

If his words are to be accepted, this great event of the future is not to be denied or questioned. In the fulfillment of the special prediction regarding the downfall of Jerusalem in the lifetime of the generation then living, we have the pledge of the ultimate accomplishment of the larger prophecy.

Jesus strongly emphasizes the certainty and reliability of his

predictions in v. 30. "Heaven and earth" is a reference to the whole of the universe, all creation. The sureness and absolute reliability of Jesus' words is far greater than the apparent continuance of the universe. It will some day cease to exist, but Jesus' words will always have validity (Mk. 13:31).

The Uncertainty of the Time of Christ's Coming

Though the coming of Jesus Christ is certain, the date of coming is known only to the Father. Neither the angels not the Son himself knows this time. Because of this Jesus warns his hearers to beware and keep alert. Jesus emphatically says the uncertainty that even him, the Son of God does not know the exact time of the parousia (Mt. 24:36).

The Signs of Christ's Coming

Changes on earth and in heaven are indications of the approaching day. As the leaves of the fig tree tell that summer is near, so events, will occur which to the understanding mind will indicate Jesus' return. Though the time is unknown, Jesus says that there will be signs for the realization of the time (Mt. 24:49ff.).

The Hope of the Fullness

This is an *assured* fact. Jesus' second coming has been declared by him under many figures, each having its own shade of spiritual meaning and practical profit. He is a Householder, who will come to take account of his servants; a Proprietor, who will come to learn how his agents have traded and what they have gained; a King, who will come to make inquiry into the conduct of his citizens and great officers of state; a Judge, who will come to summon the people before his tribunal. This new life is the awaited fullness of the creation, a new creation. This is assuredly hoped for.

At the same time, the period of the Lord's return is hidden from us, and we are informed that to the unprepared it will be sudden and unexpected.

The great emphasis of these verses is on revelation and triumph. Whereas the Son of Man has been hidden or at least veiled in his first coming, now he will be revealed. Whereas he has been the lowly Suffering Servant, despised and rejected by human beings, the Son of Man at his parousia will come in triumph "with great power and glory." And his chief concern at his coming will be to bring together his people (v. 27) so that they may be with him. Therefore he sends forth his angels to gather the elect from all over the world. Calvin commented, "For, though the Church be now tormented by the malice of men, or even broken by the violence

of the billows, and miserably torn in pieces, so as to have no stability in the world, yet we ought always to cherish confident hope, because it will not be by human means, but by heavenly power, which will be far superior to every obstacle, that the Lord will *gather* his Church." This is the fullness of the new creation which the believers are hoping for.

CHAPTER 32

The Coming of God's Reign: Justice and Peace in Fullness

Jesus, although his life and ministry are in truth, peace and justice, said that the final and the universal judgment of God to all in justice and peace will happen in future. Jesus has established the Kingdom of God here on earth, but the finality and culmination lies ahead of time. In that final judgment, Jesus said that the good will be rewarded and the bad will be condemned into eternal damnation. The judgment will be just and everyone will be judged according to what they did in life. This discourse is clearly recorded by Matthew in chapter 25th of his Gospel. It is best seen especially in Matthew's parable of the talents (Mt. 25:14-30) and Jesus' prediction of the judgment of the nations (Mt. 25:31-46).

1) The Parable of the Talents (Mt. 25:14-30)

In the parable of the talents (Mt. 25:14-30), the owner of the slaves, before going for a journey, entrusted his slaves five, two and one talents. This parable is more individual while the other parable which we find below is more corporate.

Their Safekeeping

The Slaves were Given Diversely

1) To one he gives "five," to another "two," to another "one." The owner has absolute freedom to give as much as he wants, so he did this.
2) He gives "to each according to his several ability." Five talents would be too much for the third slave while one would be too little for first slave. God, who distributes, knows.

Similarly, God gives every believer talents according to our abilities. Justice also is obvious in the distribution. No one is pressed beyond his/

her powers. No one has any right to complain that he/she has more or less than another. The most important thing is that one should improve one's own gifts or talents no matter what if it is little or much.

He Gives Them to be Improved

(1) Every gift and grace of God is capable of improvement.

(2) No talent must be buried. One should not be too slothful to be useful.

Judgment on Human

The Diligent are Rewarded

(1) They can render their account with joy. The master put him in charge of many things. In the day of judgment, the faithful will be rewarded justly.

(2) They receive commendation. They are praised for their goodness and faithfulness. The *servant* over the few things is to be made ruler over many things.

(3) They receive glory. "Enter into the joy of your Lord." Those who deserve will be receiving glory, an entrance into the joy of God in glory.

The Idle are Punished

Contrastingly, the wicked and the slothful or unprofitable persons will justly be punished.

(1) They are reproached. "Wicked and slothful" is opposed to "good and faithful."

(2) The parable puts a weak excuse into the mouth of the slothful servant, to show that for neglect there is no apology.

(3) The indolent are deprived of their gifts and graces. "Take the talent from him." From those unfaithful and unjust people, who do not improve their gifts, even what they have will be taken away.

(4) The unprofitable are relegated to wrath (ver. 30) "into outer darkness" where "there shall be weeping."

We can summarize this parable that everybody has been entrusted with the same "amount" (gift), but one must be faithful with what one has been given. Thus the two-talent person is given precisely the same award as the five-talent person (as would be the one-talent person, if only that talent had been used). The disciple who uses that with which he or she has been entrusted will receive the wonderful praise, "Well done, good and faithful servant," and will enter into the full joy of

eschatological blessing. The disciple who, on the other hand, fails to make productive use of what has been given faces the terrifying prospect of ultimate loss. The faithful will be further blessed; the unfaithful will lose all. The point cannot be missed: before the Son of Man comes and until that time whenever it may be, disciples are called to faithful and steady service of the kingdom because the judgment is just.[1]

2) The Judgment of the Nations (Mt. 25:31-46)

In Matthew, the final section of the eschatological discourse ends in a great judgment scene. The passage is concerned with the return of the Son of Man (v. 31) and the immediately subsequent judgment, with the blessing of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked. It is a time of accounting and a time of division.[2]

The Award of the Righteous

They are commended

The righteous are commended because they showed kindness to the disciples of Jesus Christ. They gave food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty; clothing to the naked; hospitality to the stranger; attention to the sick; encouragement to the prisoner. Service to others, the poor and the least people is service to God/Christ. The peace makers and doers of justice for Christ's sake will be rewarded. They are called and greeted as 'blessed by the Father.'

They are promoted

Jesus will call the righteous as 'blessed by my Father'. They will become the blessed one, blessed by God. They will also inherit the kingdom which has been prepared for them form the foundation of the world (Mt. 25:34).

The Doom of the Wicked

Just as the righteous are rewarded, the wicked will be condemned into eternal doom.

They are convicted

They were charged against as not giving what the righteous people give to the least people. They did not take care of Jesus. They would not consider Christ in his disciples.

They are degraded

The evil workers are ordered to depart from the judge to eternal fire

prepared for the devil and his angels. The judge (Jesus) also called them accursed. Eternal fire means hell, eternal punishment.

The time of the great judgment wherein the righteous and the unrighteous are finally separated will arrive with the glorious coming of the Son of Man. All the nations of the world—that is, every individual of those nations—are to be judged on the basis of their treatment of disciples of Jesus. This perhaps surprising statement points at once to the unique relation between Jesus and those who follow him and to the supreme importance of the mission and message of the church to the world.

The above parable of the talents and the great judgment clarifies that in the coming reign of God at the end, the judgment will be according to one's own behavior and works. Peace and justice will be prevailed once for all. Judgment will be carried out justly. The righteous will be rewarded and the wicked will be condemned eternally. Peace will be prevailing as the evil will be subjected to the reign of God. Justice will be the characteristics of the reign of God in the fullness of time.

Endnotes

1 Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 14-28*.
2 Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 14-28*.

CHAPTER 33

The Universal Reign of God

In the early history of Israel, other peoples are either enemies or irrelevant. If they are enemies of Israel, they are hostile to the purpose of Yahweh in history, and he removes them. During the exile and afterward Israel perceives that the universal lordship of Yahweh cannot be vindicated unless he is recognized as Yahweh by all peoples. If all peoples are to know him, then they will share the religious gift originally conferred on Israel; and ultimately the differences between Israel and other peoples must and will be obliterated. They were the special people of God, exclusively elected by God. Yahweh is their God and all the others were pagans or gentiles. They were defiled people and their lands were also profane lands. They were extremely exclusive to that far.[1]

But that Jewish exclusivism has been uprooted and the barrier between the Jews and gentiles was pushed down by Jesus. The true inclusivism of the gentiles into the community of God was brought forth by Jesus, which was effectively carried out by Paul, who was called an apostle to gentiles. Although the inclusion of gentiles into the reign of God was introduced in the teaching and ministry of Jesus, yet the fulfillment and the climax is still awaited. In that fullness of the universal reign of God, all peoples, irrespective of races will be the people of God. Yahweh will be the God of all. Jesus' teaching on this can be seen mostly in Matthew 8:11-12 and Luke 13:22-30.

When Jesus said that many or people will come from east and west, form north and south and eat in the kingdom of God, there may be a still deeper implication. This passage reflected the OT prediction, and they can be divided into three groups:

1) Those that describe a gathering of Israel from all quarters of the earth (Ps. 107:3; Isa. 43:5-6; 49:12);

2) Those that predict the worship of God by Gentiles in all parts of the earth (Isa. 45:6; 59:19; Mal. 1:11);

3) Those that predict the coming of Gentiles to Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3; 60:34; Mic. 4:1-2; Zech. 8:20-23).

Matthean View

Matthew begins with the statement about "many" who will come from east and west (Luke in the parallel has added "north and south") to recline at table with the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob). The allusion is to the eschatological banquet, a great festival of rejoicing and feasting in celebration of the victory of God, anticipated in both the OT and NT. Until this point, such a banquet was thought to be a strictly for the Jews, with the Gentiles at best receiving the overflow from the blessing to the Jews. For the Jews, the references concerning the coming of many from east and west were understood as referring to the return of Diaspora Jews to Israel. The great family of the covenant people of God would gather with the patriarchs, who symbolize Israel, in the new eschatological kingdom and feast together with them. But now with the coming of the Messiah, that exclusivism is turned on its head in an apparent reversal of salvation-history. It is the Gentiles who are being called from the ends of the earth. Jesus said this in connection with the gentile, the centurion.[2]

The centurion represents the Gentiles who will come from east and west to join the eschatological banquet, while the Jews, the so-called "sons of the kingdom," will themselves (who reject the Messiah) be rejected. The true "sons of the kingdom" are now those who respond to the proclamation of Jesus (cf. 13:38; cf. 5:45).[3]

Lukan View

Lk. 13:29–30 act as a kind of concluding summary of the preceding discussion on the number of people saved. Jesus said that a narrow door is the entrance for that kingdom. He said that people will come from east and west, from north and sound and will ear in the kingdom of God (Lk. 13:29). While Matthew applies the text to the gathering in of the Gentiles, Luke seems to stay with its original reference to the eschatological gathering of Israel. The prophetically anticipated gathering of the dispersed People of God from the four corners of the earth will take place, but Jesus' hearers should be warned that this great event will not take place without some surprising reversals. In this reversal, those who thought that they were first will be the last and the last will be the first.[4]

However, this is not the only understanding of Luke. In the wider Gospel context we see the inclusion of the excluded segments of Israel

(cf. 14:21–23); and in the full Lukan context we will find the inclusion of the Gentiles in the salvation purposes of God.[5]

Summary

1) The Jew and the Gentile

The Jew, who prided himself on being the first favourite of Heaven, was to become the very last in God's true purpose of salvation. He was to bear the penalty due to the guilty race that did not know the visitation of the Messiah. They rather laid their hands in the blood of their own Messiah. Thus, the gentiles are given privilege.

2) The Outwardly Correct and the Ill-Behaved

The Pharisees regarded themselves as religious and ambassadors of God. But they refused the true messiah and Jesus. So, they are far off the kingdom, while "the publican and the sinner" are found at the feet of Christ, asking for the way of life, for the waters of cleansing, for the mercy of God. Though they exclusively claim that God is grim to the sinners but kind to the outwardly religious people like Pharisees etc. the reign of God is universal to all who accept God.

3) The Learned and the Ignorant

The outcasts and the oppressed people, women, shepherds, children, etc. were the least of the society. They had no or less importance socially, politically and religiously. But they are the recipients of the Kingdom of God. But the scholars, scribes, lawyers etc. who defined themselves the preeminent citizens were the last in the new community of Jesus. The one time excluded people will be the first while the self-esteemed elites will be the last in the reign of God. They all will come from different parts of the world.

Endnotes

1 John L. McKenzie, "Aspects of Old Testament Thought," in *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2002), 1304.

2 Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 1-13*.

3 Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary: Matthew 1-13*.

4 Nolland, *Word Biblical Commentary: Luke 9:21-18:34*. *Word Biblical Commentary: Luke 9:21-18:34*.

5 Nolland, *Word Biblical Commentary: Luke 9:21-18:34*. *Word Biblical Commentary: Luke 9:21-18:34*.

CHAPTER 34

Guide for Full Exegesis (New Testament-Gospels)[1]

1) Introduction

The key to good exegesis is the ability to ask the right questions of the text in order to get at the author's intended meaning. Good exegetical questions fall into two basic categories: questions of *content* (what is said) and of *context* (why it is said).

a) The *questions of content* are basically of four kinds: **textual criticism** (the determination of the actual wording of the author), **lexical data** (the meaning of words), **grammatical data** (the relationship of words to one another), and historical-cultural background (the relationship of words and ideas to the background and culture of the author and his readers).

b) The *contextual questions* are of two kinds: historical and literary. Historical context has to do both with the general historical setting of a document (e.g., the city of Corinth, its geography, people, religions, economy, etc.) and with the specific occasion of the document (i.e., why it was written). Literary context has to do with why a given thing was said at a given point in the argument or narrative.

Good exegesis, therefore, is the happy combination-or careful integration-of all these data into a readable presentation. The aim of such a presentation is not originality or uniqueness, but a clear understanding of the author's original intention.

2) Steps

Step 1

Survey the Historical Context in General

i) Who is the author?

ii) Who are the recipients?
iii) What is the relationship between them?
iv) Where do the recipients live?
v) What are their present circumstances?
vi) What historical situation occasioned this writing?
vii) What is the author's purpose?
viii) What is the overall theme or concern?

Step 2

Confirm the Limits of the Passage

Determine whether the passage selected for exegesis is a genuine, self-contained unit. Even if you are exegeting only a single sentence, that sentence must ve placed into its won paragraph or periscope. To do this, check the paragraphing of the two primary critical editions of the Greek texts (Nestle-Aland and UBS fourth edition).

Step 3

Be Thorough With Your Paragraph/Pericope

i) Make a provisional/temporary translation (Greek)

ii) Make a provisional list of exegetical difficulties:

Make a separate list of textual, grammatical, and lexical items that will need special study (e.g., are there textual variations that make a difference in UBS? Are there theologically loaded words? Are some words used repeatedly in this passage...?)

iii) Read the paragraph through in **several translation** (English)

-Read the paragraph through in at least seven translation (e.g., KJV, NASB, NRSV, NIV, GNB, REB, NJB)

iv) Mark well the differences between/among translations

v) Determine which of these differences is exegetically significant. Determine which differences are merely synonyms or matters of taste, and which make genuine differences in meaning.

Step 4

Establish the Text

i) Find out if there are any textual variations

ii) The method employed here is textual criticism

Step 5

Analyze the Grammar

i) Try to understand the grammar properly

ii) Discuss only those where exegetical decision is important or makes a difference in the meaning of the passage.

Step 6

Analyze Significant Words

Be careful here. Do not let your paper become a collection of mini word studies. Explain what is not obvious. Concentrate on key words and wordings.

Step 7 (Gospels)

Identify the specific literary form:

i) Is the pericope a narrative?

a) Is it a miracle story?

b) Is it a story about Jesus?

c) Or about John the Baptist?

d) Is it a passion narrative?

ii) Is it a saying?

a) If so, what kind of saying, is it a parable?

b) Is it a similitude?

c) An apocalyptic saying?

d) A wisdom saying?

e) A prophetic saying?

f) A piece of legal material?

g) A poetic saying?

Are there parallel verses in other books?

i) If so, what are the differences?

ii) Redaction criticism (editorial notes).

Step 8

Examine the Historical Context in Particular

i) **Audience:** the situation of the recipients. What is said explicitly? What is implied? Is the problem one of theological misunderstanding or lack of understanding? Are they in need of comfort, exhortation, correction? Is the problem coming from outside the believing community or risen from within?

ii) **Key words:** make a list of key words and repeated phrases that indicate the subject matter of the section. What words appear most often in the whole section?

Step 9

Consider the Broader Biblical and Theological Contexts

i) Find out the larger and the narrower context of the selected texts

ii) Consider how important is your selected passages in the section or book or epistle or New Testament or the whole Bible.

iii) Is there any other appearance in other books? If so, what does the selected text intend to say more?

Step 10

Use Secondary Sources and Read Widely

i) Consult scholars' books

ii) What points have they made that you overlooked? What have they said better? What have they given more weight to?

iii) Try to point out things that they have said that are questionable or wrong.

iv) Do they organize their exegesis in a better way?

v) Do they supplement your won findings? If so, revise your conclusion.

Step 11

Provide a Finished Translation (Optional)

After the completion of the research, place the finished translation immediately following the text. Use footnote to explain choices of words that might be surprising or simply not obvious to the readers.

Step 12

Overview

i) Give an overview of your exegesis.

ii) What is the point of the research?

iii) What is the main contribution to the studies?

Step 13

Conclusion

Step 14

Application (Not Compulsory)

The task is moving from the first century to the present century.

It is the task to take the point of the passage that has been exegeted to a living word for a present day congregation.

In writing down sermon, the following guideline might be useful:

1. The main point/points of the biblical text that you want to proclaim. [caution: do not touch every exegetical point-only those that contribute to this sermon]
2. The purpose of the present sermon (how the above exegesis are seen to be applicable).
3. The response that one hopes the sermon will achieve.

Endnotes

[1] For detail, cf. Gordon D. Fee, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, [1983], 1993), 31-61.

Exegesis on Matthew 13

The seven parables concerning the kingdom of God

Jesus teaches the large crowd by the lakeside in this, the third of Matthew's five discourses in which he has collected together **seven parables** concerning the kingdom.

MT. 13:1-9 PARABLE OF THE SOWER

The first of these, concerning the soils/sower, is particularly relevant to the rejection and hostility themes and thus the apparent failure of the kingdom that dominate chap. 12. Those who hear the proclamation of the kingdom respond in a variety of ways; not all seed that is sown is productive. The detailed explanation of this first parable is not given until vv 18–23.

1–2 The "**house**" refers presumably to the place where Jesus was teaching when his mother and brothers sought him (12:46), probably Peter's house in Capernaum. Jesus sat by the edge of the lake, apparently in order to teach. Inthat culture, teachers sat (cf. 5:1; 24:3), but because of the press of the crowds Jesus was forced to get into a boat (cf. Mk. 3:9; Lk. 5:3).

3. Matthew uses the word for the first time here in introducing the so-called parable discourse (cf. the conclusion in 13:53). Jesus talked about the parable of the sower here. The sight of the sower sowing was a very common one in that agricultural society, and the varied fate of the seeds was well known. The deeper meaning of this parable, which initially may or may not have been clear, was explained to the disciples in vv 18–23.

4 The **first example** concerns seed that in the process of scattering ends up "along the edge of the path" (or possibly "on" the path; cf. BAGD, 611a) , on the hardened ground and not in the plowed earth. It remains unclear, however, whether the field would have been

plowed before the sowing or *after*, which was apparently done on occasion. If the plowing in this instance is understood to have been done afterwards, then the sowing of seed upon the path and upon rocky ground (v 5) becomes perhaps a little easier to understand. The seed on the path becomes easy food for the birds and is thus prevented from producing fruit.

5–6 The second example refers to seed that in the sowing falls on **the rocky ground or upon stony ground**. This seed grows quickly because it is in such shallow soil and cannot put down deep roots, without which it cannot trap the moisture of the ground. Hence it burns under the hot midday sun (cf. Jas 1:11), withers, and dies.

7 In the third example, the seed falls "among thorn bushes." The rapidly growing wild thorn bushes eventually squeeze out and kill the tender seedling. And thus once again the sower is let down and the seed wasted.

8 In the fourth and final example, however, the seed falls "on the good soil." In this instance the seed "kept producing" fruit in the usual varying amounts; in the best case, some a hundredfold, others sixtyfold, and others thirtyfold.

9 With the words "Let the person who has ears hear!" the listener or reader is suddenly alerted to understand that the parable points beyond itself to a greater reality. The phrase "who has ears" refers to a receptivity concerning the basic truth of the parable. It amounts to an appeal to hear positively and to respond appropriately.

Explanation

The focus of the parable is not upon the sower (despite being called "the parable of the sower"), nor even the seed, but upon the fate of the seed, which is directly dependent upon the kind of soil that received it. This will be seen clearly in the interpretation of the parable given by Jesus in vv 18–23. The parable addresses the failure and success of seed in the goal of fruit bearing. Specifically it describes the environment in which the seed comes to no effect and that in which the seed becomes productive. The matter discussed here involves the grace of God and the responsiveness of human beings.

MATTHEW 13:10-17 THE PURPOSE OF THE PARABLES

10-11: As Jesus used parable to explain about the kingdom of God, not only the crowd did not understand, but also the disciples did not get what he meant. Jesus used "**it has been given**;" this is a **divine passive** that assumes God as the acting subject. God has granted the disciples "to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven"; to the crowds God has not granted this.

The word "**secret" or** "**mysteries**" (the word 'mystery' is used in the Greek text) refers to "the secret thoughts, plans, and dispensations of God which are hidden from human reason". The expression "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" refers to the meaning of Jesus' teaching about the kingdom, i.e., particularly its reality, yet its veiled existence in the present as well as its future manifestation. It tends to mean *the Kingdom which is to come finally in apocalyptic power, as foreseen by Daniel, has in fact entered into the world in advance in a hidden form to work secretly within and among men.*

12 The problem of the injustice of God giving to those who have and taking away from those who have not can be understood when it is realized that Jesus refers simply to *receptivity* and *unreceptivity*. The one who "has" is the one who has welcomed the message of the kingdom and who has responded it, i.e., who has become a disciple of Jesus. This person has the key to further understanding of the purpose and plan of God in the presently dawning kingdom.

The one who "does not have" is the person who has not received or responded the proclamation of Jesus and the disciples. Of that person it is said that "even what that person has will be taken away." Having rejected the message of the kingdom from the start, that person is unable to understand the truth of the parables of Jesus. But even what such a person is inclined to fall back on—say, trust in Jewishness and Judaism—that too will be taken away.

13 This is an allusion to Isa 6:9 that means the hardness of heart. The root problem is the unwillingness of the people to receive the message of Jesus. The verbs used here imply a willful closed mindedness: they *will* not see, hear, or understand.

14–15 This quotation is almost literal quotation (verbatim) from the standard LXX text of Isa. 6:9-10 and therefore is not a part of Jesus' original words. So, this can be understood as the evangelist's (Matthew's) insertion/addition, not actual Jesus' words. Matthew tried to say, by quoting Isaiah's words, about the Jewish unbelief and unresponsiveness and rejection of Jesus. As Isaiah said, they will hear but not at all understand, will see but not at all perceive. The evidence will have been before their eyes, and they will have seen and heard it, yet without understanding it. **"(Lest) they should repent**." It was because they were unwilling to repent that they

saw, heard, and understood so poorly.

16-17 The "you," puts great stress on the contrast between those who have not responded to the message of the gospel and those who have, namely, the disciples (cf. v 10). Their eyes and ears are described as "blessed" because they see and hear in the sense of receiving and understanding. The disciples were blessed by God and privileged above the crowd because they saw and heard what "many prophets and righteous men" longed to see but did not. The reference is to OT prophets and others who were just before God-people who looked forward to the coming of the kingdom.

Explanation

Parables function in a twofold way. For those who respond positively to Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom, the parables convey further insight and knowledge, while for those who reject Jesus and his message, the parables have the effect of only darkening the message more. Thus, belief and commitment lead to more knowledge; unbelief leads to more ignorance. The object of knowledge here is called "the mysteries of the kingdom." In other words, Jesus proclaims that the kingdom has come, yet it has come in a secret or veiled form. It requires faith and commitment to know and experience the kingdom. Only people of faith and commitment can know the mysteries of the kingdom of God now manifested on earth.

THE EXPLANATION OF THE PARABLE OF THE SOILS (13:18–23)

18 Jesus spoke to the disciples "hear." Jesus used 'you' to address the disciples. This emphatically says that the disciples alone know "the mysteries of the kingdom." 'Hear' here means "listen to (the meaning of)."

19 The sower is probably to be understood as Jesus, implying that ultimately the parable refers to the reception or non-reception of Jesus himself. Those who will not receive the message do not understand it. The evil one, called "Satan" in Mark 4:15 and "the devil" in Luke 8:12; is symbolized by the birds. In fact, close study of birds as symbols in the OT and especially in the literature of later Judaism shows that birds regularly symbolize evil and even demons or Satan (cf. b. *Sanhedrin* 107a; *Jub.* 11.11–12; *Apoc. Abr.* 13.3–7; cf. Rev 18:2). It is because they have rejected the message that the evil one is enabled to snatch away the seed.

20–21 In the second instance, that of the rocky soil, the immediate sprouting of the seed is described as the joyful reception of the word. Here there is not only the "hearing of the word" but also the "receiving" of it. The person is likened to the thin soil, and the

response is described as "only for a time".

The rising sun that burns up the seedling (v 6) mans the coming of "tribulation or persecution because of the word," i.e., suffering for the message of the kingdom. The expectation of persecution has already been an important theme in Matthew. The follower of Jesus must be prepared for this suffering till the end. There are some people who at once receive the word with joy, and as "quickly" "fall away". Such temporary disciples are always numerous in times of revival and were so in Jesus' ministry.

22 The third instance again includes a reference to "the one who hears the word." The thorn bushes which grow up and choke the seedling (v 7) are identified as "the cares of the world and the lures of wealth." Both objects, cares/anxiety and wealth, are the subject of Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. These worldly pleasures can become barriers for discipleship and they can spoil response to the message of the kingdom.

23 The seed that fell "on the good soil" (cf. v 8) refers to the situation where the word is heard, but where the word is also understood. "Understanding," here means receptivity. The fruit is probably to be understood as the pattern of conduct described in the Sermon on the Mount (chaps. 5–7), i.e., the living out of the kingdom of God here and now.

THE PARABLE OF THE WEEDS AMONG THE WHEAT (13:24–30)

This parable occurs only in Matthew.

24 Jesus told "them" another parable (literally, "he put another before them"). "Them" must be the crowd, not the disciples.

The kingdom of heaven is not "like a man" but "like the situation of a man who sow a good seed in his field." The "**is like**" formula here means not simply "is like" but reflects an Aramaic idiom meaning "It is the case with X as with Y" (cf. Jeremiah *Parables*, pp. 100f.; Zerwick, par. 65; Kingsbury, *Parables*, 67).

25–26 "Sleeping" does not imply that the servants were neglectful but that the enemy was quiet and wicked. What he sowed was *zizania* ("weeds," a kind of darnel, a common weed that plagued grain fields) which is very close to wheat and difficult to distinguish from it when the plants are young. The roots of the two plants entangle themselves around each other; but when the heads of grain appear on the wheat, there is no doubt which plant is which. This weed the enemy sowed "among the wheat. The growing plants gradually become identifiable, and the servants tell their master about the

weeds.

27 The man of v 24 is now identified as "master of the house". In this parable the servants address their master as 'Lord' or 'Master' (Kyrie). This address may mean the identification of the master as Jesus and the servants as his disciples.

To the servants' question about the source of the abundant weeds is not a real question, but didactically designed in order to know the master's response.

28–29 The master said, "An enemy has done this." The weeds in this instance are not the result of natural processes but of a deliberate attempt to ruin the work of the master of the house who planted good seed.

The servants naturally ask whether they should gather up the weeds. The master responds negatively to their suggestion. As the roots of the weed and the wheat are so closely intermingled and as the roots of the weed/darnel are stronger and deeper than those of wheat, so that the removal of one would often result in the uprooting of the other. That is the reason why the master did not allow his servants to remove the weeds.

30 The command of the master of the house is to let "both" weeds and wheat grow together "until the harvest." At that time the two will be gathered and separated, the weeds as fuel for burning, the wheat into the granary. The key point here is that it is not yet the time of the harvest (i.e., eschatological judgment) and thus, not yet the time for the separating of the weeds from the wheat.

THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED (13:31–32)

31 Matthew used "someone" who is sowing the mustard seed. This is probably due to the association of this parable with the previous parable (the weed), which also uses the word 'someone (*anthropos*).

32 **The smallest of all the seeds:** Means all those ordinarily sown in Palestine then. In the ancient world and among the rabbis the mustard seed was known for its smallness (whether it is white or black mustard that is intended makes little difference). It is also referred to as the smallest of all seeds.

But when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree: From this "smallest" of seeds, an amazingly large bush-like plant finally comes out, large enough to hold the nests of birds.

So that the birds of the air: In the parable of the sower, bird is likened with the devil. But there is no connotation of evil about bird here.

Come and make nests in its branches: In Palestine the goldfinches and linnets settle on the mustard in flocks.

The point is the whole unity of small beginning and mature end. No pious Jew doubted that the kingdom would come and that it would be vast and glorious. What Jesus is teaching goes beyond that: he is saying that there is a basic connection between the small beginnings taking place under his ministry and the kingdom in its future glory.

Explanation

The kingdom of God has humble beginnings; it is like a mustard seed, small and unimpressive. It can be overlooked or dismissed as a little/ trifle. Its coming did not crush the world, as had been expected. Yet it is destined to become an impressive body in contrast to its beginnings. The kingdom's mysterious growth is the work of God. Although we cannot see the growth of the Kingdom of God, yet it is still growing inside of it and will be accomplished.

THE PARABLE OF THE YEAST (13:33)

33 "leaven" or "yeast," was a common and important thing in Palestinian households. Its character of gradual, initially insignificant and fermentation is specially known. Although leaven symbolized the corrupting influence of evil in the OT there is no indication that Matthew here thinks of the leaven as something evil. What he portrays, rather, is the dynamic power of leaven though a small amount, which is barely visible, has an ultimate, inevitable, and amazing effect upon the whole.

The kingdom of God is like leaven in this way. Although at the beginning it looks nothing special, it will have an effect. There is no need to explain the details such as **the woman, the three measures, or the whole lump of dough** itself. However, the amount of dough (three measures) roughly equals to about 50 kilograms of bread or enough to feed 150 people.

Thus, the parable of the yeast tries to say that the kingdom of God is working secretly and unnoticed, but it pervades and finally overcomes life.

THE USE OF PARABLES (MT. 13:34-35)

34 This statement reaffirms that made in v 13 (cf. v 11). It does not mean that he told nothing but parables to the crowd but that he said nothing to them without using parables. In short parables were an essential part of his spoken ministry.

35 The quotation is from Psalm 78:2 (LXX 77), a psalm of Asaph.

Through the prophet: The prophet here may mean either David or Asaph, the composer of this Psalm. Since the Psalms were generally regarded by first-century Jews as composed by David, it was easy to apply the words to David's greater Son, the Messiah. Thus, this **prophet,** here means David.

The final phrase, "**that has been hidden from the foundation of the world**," can be interpreted as the belief of the evangelist (Matthew) and the early Church that the message and mission of Jesus were nothing other than the working out of God's plan of salvation from the beginning.

JESUS EXPLAINS THE PARABLE OF THE WEEDS (13:36–43)

The second parable, concerning the wheat and the weeds (vv 24–30), is now given its interpretation privately before the disciples. In the construction of the discourse, this explanation of the parable is delayed until this point, exactly because a private setting is required. Like the parable itself, its explanation is found only in Matthew and is possibly derived from the evangelist's special source.

36 Jesus either sent the crowd away or he left them. The house referred to was located, presumably, in Capernaum.

The disciples do not understand the parables simply because they are Jesus' immediate disciples. Instead, they need explanations. They are not distinguished from the crowds by their instant and intuitive understanding but by their persistence in seeking explanations. Jesus' disciples come to him and ask, and therefore a full explanation is given them.

37–39 The explanation of the parable begins with the identification of seven key elements:

(1) The one sowing the good seed (= the Son of Man): Jesus himself.

(2) The field (= the world): "the world," cannot have been understood as the Church. However, it means the worldwide mission of the Church in the spread of the gospel (cf. 24:14; 28:19).

(3) The good seed (= those who belong to the kingdom/the children of the Kingdom): Those who belong to the kingdom or the believers, in contrast to the unbelieving Jews.

(4) The weeds (= those of the evil one): Those associated with the evil one (cf. 1 John 3:10; John 8:44). In rabbinic literature, wheat and weeds can refer to Israel and the Gentiles respectively.

(5) The enemy who sowed the weeds (= the Devil);

(6) The harvest (= the end of the age): The harvest is a common and appropriate metaphor for the judgment that will occur at the end of the present age.

(7) The harvesters (= angels): Angels were commonly believed in Jewish tradition to be administrators of the will of God in the accomplishing of eschatological judgment (see *1 Enoch* 46:5; 63:1).

40 The central point of the parable is now explained. The gathering of the weeds and their burning refer to the eschatological judgment that will take place "at the end of the age" (cf. vv 39 and 49).

41–42 First there is the judgment of the wicked. The sower (v 37) is then also the judge. The wicked are gathered from the kingdom. They live together with the righteous, and they are also the members of the visible church, but are now finally distinguished and separated from the righteous people. The words "they will cast them into the furnace of fire," are taken nearly literally from Dan 3:6. They, like the weeds, are thrown into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, that is, eschatological doom.

43 If the lawless are to suffer punishment, then the righteous are to be rewarded. "The righteous," is a favorite term of Matthew. Their blessedness is indicated in the words "**they will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father**." This language is almost exactly the same as that used in describing the transfiguration of Jesus in 17:2 and suggests the experiencing of the glory of God. It is found occasionally in the rabbinic literature.

THE THREE PARABLES

THE PARABLES OF THE TREASURE AND THE PEARL (13:44–46)

The fifth and sixth parables have no explanation in the text; this may be because they are spoken to the disciples, who will know their meaning. These two parables are found only in Matthew and are probably drawn from his special source.

44 The kingdom is not simply like a treasure, but its situation is like the situation of a treasure hidden in a field. Finding the treasure appears to be by chance. In a land as frequently disturbed/ravaged as Palestine, many people used to bury their treasures; but to find a treasure would happen once in a thousand lifetimes. Thus the over-spending of the parable amplifies the supreme importance of the kingdom.

Under rabbinic law if a workman found a treasure in a field and lifted it out, it would belong to his master, the field's owner; but here the man is careful not to lift the treasure out till he has bought the field. However, the parable deals with neither the legality nor the morality of the situation but with the value of the treasure, which is worth every sacrifice, selling all he has. When the man buys the field at such sacrifice, he possesses far more than the price paid. The kingdom of heaven is worth infinitely more than the cost of discipleship, and those who know where the treasure lies joyfully abandon everything else to secure it. The sole point being made is that the kingdom is worth everything.

45–46 The parable likens the kingdom to the situation of a pearl merchant. This merchant finds one supremely precious. Pearls were very highly valued in the ancient world, more so than gold.

The real connection with the last parable is the supreme worth of the kingdom. Jesus does not intend to say that one can "buy" the kingdom; on the contrary, he is saying that the person who truly knows the true value of the kingdom, gladly exchanges all else to follow him.

Explanation

The kingdom of God is the greatest of treasures. Though its worth is beyond measure by any standard, it is now present only in obscure/ veiled form and can be possessed by some without the knowledge of those near them. Like a hidden treasure or a pearl that can be held in one's hand, the kingdom is known only to its joyful possessors. Yet those who find the kingdom, i.e., who receive the message and who respond in discipleship, have begun to experience the marvel of the kingdom's presence. They know that the kingdom is a reality that is worth everything. They seek first the kingdom, sacrificing all to it, but at the same time paradoxically finding with the kingdom all they need.

EXEGESIS ON LUKE 1:46-56

LUKE 1:46-56

The song of Mary as found in Lk. 1:46-56 is called the *Magnificat*. It is an outburst of praise in Old Testament language. It is very much similar to the song of Hannah (1 Sam. 2:1-10). However, there is a difference in nature. Hannah's song is a shout of triumph in the face of her enemies while Mary's song is a humble reflection of the mercies of God.

46-48: Mary's song begins with an expression of praise.

Soul and spirit: This is a synonymous parallelism. There is no difference between soul and spirit here. It is only a poetic parallelism. It means her inner self.

God my savior: this shows that Mary recognized her need-she was a sinner like other people. She needed God to save her.

Low estate: it signifies her humility before God.

49-50: From thankfulness for what God has done for her, Mary turns to his wider activities. Mary acknowledges God's three natures:

1) **God's power:** She sees herself as an insignificant, but that does not matter, for the Mighty One is at work. She experienced the power of God.
2) **God's holiness:** God is not to be thought only in terms of power. He is holy. Mary said that the name of God is holy. The name in antiquity was used with a fuller meaning than today. It stood for the whole person. So, this verse means not simply that God's name is a holy name and must be used reverently; it means that God is a holy God.
3) **God's mercy:** Further, God is merciful. In every generation God's mercy is certain for those who reverence him. Mary praised God for God's mercy on her.

51-53: This section of the song tells of a complete reversal of human values. It is not the **proud** or the **mighty** or the **rich** who have God's favor. Indeed, through his Messiah, God is about to overthrow all of them.

The proud: it is proud thoughts that are in mind and not simply arrogant actions. It denotes inward quality of human.

The mighty: the mighty are actually ruling people, not simply powerful people.

There is a revolutionary note about **filling the hungry** and **sending the rich away empty**. In the ancient world it was accepted that the rich would be well cared for. Poor people must expect to be hungry. But Mary praises God who is turning the situation. God turns human attitudes and orders of society upside down.

54-55: Mary now sings of God's help for his people. Mary said that God's help and mercy as found in the Messiah's work now is not a fresh new thing, or only from Abraham onwards; but rather in accordance with God's promise to the fathers of old time.

Mary's song of praise is all about the reversal of human social inequalities and oppression of the poor. God has visited his people and now the poor receive the special favor of God. Hence, the rich, the mighty and the proud are the pulled down and their position are turned upside down.

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