

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE FOR ALL ITS WORTH

CHAPTER 7 – THE GOSPELS:
ONE STORY, MANY DIMENSIONS

THE NATURE OF THE GOSPELS

- Jesus did not write the gospels, so they are indirect sources of Christ
- 3 of the gospels share large similarities while John is very unique

THE NATURE OF THE GOSPELS

- Why 4 gospels?
- Why does Mark exist at all (of the 3 Synoptic Gospels, Mark contains no more than 2 pages of unique information)?

THE NATURE OF THE GOSPELS

- Mark was likely written first
- Given differing needs of differing communities, Matthew and Luke used Mark as a baseline and added other true accounts
- John was written from a completely different perspective.

THE NATURE OF THE GOSPELS

- Each Gospel stands unique and operates on 2 levels:
 - Historical perspective – Who was Jesus?
 - Existential concern – Telling the account from a less Jewish and agricultural perspective (Rome, Ephesus, Antioch were all urban, pagan cultures)

THE NATURE OF THE GOSPELS

- The gospels then are not biographies
- Rather, they are “memoirs of the apostles” –
Justin Martyr

THE NATURE OF THE GOSPELS

- The gospels record the facts *about* Jesus, recall the teaching *of* Jesus, and bear witness *to* Jesus.
- We then must consider the historical setting of Jesus and the historical setting of the authors.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF JESUS

- General:
 - Understanding 1st Century Judaism
 - What is the difference between a Pharisee and a Sadducee?
 - Why were the Sadducees opposed to Christ?

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF JESUS

- In Particular:
 - Gospels are made up of pericopes (individual stories and sayings) with little context
 - The arrangement of the pericopes in the gospels are what provide us with context

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF JESUS

- In Particular:
 - They are presented differently based on the leading of the Spirit for the needs of a particular community

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF JESUS

- To best gauge the context, we must know who Christ was speaking to:
 - The Twelve
 - His larger group of followers
 - His opponents

INTERPRETING PERICOPES

- Think Horizontally
- Think Vertically
- Interpret the Gospels as a Whole

PERICOPES – THINKING HORIZONTALLY

- Is the pericope in another Gospel?
- This is not to fill in the story, but rather to notice the differences. What makes this unique?
- What is the context that requires the distinctive?

PERICOPES – THINKING HORIZONTALLY

- The points of agreement are astounding, but the points of difference are what matter.
- The points of agreement reveal harmony and a common source of truth.
- The points of disagreement reveal context.

PERICOPES – THINKING HORIZONTALLY

- The Beatitudes

- Matthew 5:3-11, Luke 6:20-23

- Matthew's Perspective vs Luke's

PERICOPES – THINKING VERTICALLY

- Consider the historical contexts of both Christ and the evangelist
- We are not attempting to study the historical Jesus as much as understand the Gospels in their present form.

PERICOPES – THINKING VERTICALLY

- Matthew 19:30, 20:16
- Matthew 19:1-30 and 20:17-34 mirror Mark 10:1-52
- Why add the parable of the equal pay here?

INTERPRETING THE GOSPELS AS A WHOLE

- 3 Principles in the composition of the Gospels:
 - Selectivity
 - Arrangement
 - Adaptation

INTERPRETING THE GOSPELS AS A WHOLE

- Mark 11:12-14, 20-25
- Matthew 21:18-22

TEACHINGS AND IMPERATIVES

- To see the imperatives as law is to misunderstand them
- They are not law in the sense that one must obey them in order to become or remain a Christian; our salvation does not depend on perfect obedience to them.
- Rather, they are descriptions, by way of imperative, of what Christian life should be like because of God's prior acceptance of us.

TEACHINGS AND IMPERATIVES

- In Christianity, religion is grace; ethics is gratitude.
- Jesus' imperatives are a word for us, but they are not like the Old Testament law.
- They describe the lived-out love of our new life as God's loved and redeemed children

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

- “One dare not think they can properly interpret the Gospels without a clear understanding of the concept of the kingdom of God in the ministry of Jesus.”

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

- Eschatology – The study of the last things or the end times.
- Jews were very eschatological in their thinking
- The Eschaton – The final event in the divine plan

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

- The *Already...Not Yet*
- The Cross and the Resurrection are the *Already*
- The Second Coming is the *Not Yet*

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

- The hermeneutical key to much in the New Testament, and especially to the ministry and teaching of Jesus, is to be found in this kind of “tension.”

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

- The kingdom, the time of God's rule, has been inaugurated with Jesus' own coming; we are called to life in the kingdom, which means life under his lordship, freely accepted and forgiven but committed to the ethics of the new era and to seeing them worked out in our own lives and world in this present age.

HOMEWORK

- Read Chapter 8
- Pick your favorite parable (but NOT the Prodigal Son...) and exegete the text
- Then retell in modern language.