Invitation to the New Testament - First Things 2nd edition Witherington Test Bank

SKU: 9780190491949-TEST-BANK

Instructor's Manual and Test Bank to Accompany

Invitation to the New Testament

First Things
Second Edition

by Ben Witherington III

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INTRODUCTION

This Instructor's Manual supplies a great deal of useful material to supplement *Invitation to the New Testament*.

This manual contains:

- **Sample Syllabi**
- **Reading Goals** for each chapter
- **Chapter Summaries** of each chapter
- A **Bank of Test Questions** (with answers) for each chapter—true/false and multiple choice
- **Essay Questions** per chapter
- **Pedagogical Suggestions** for further reading by chapter
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READING GOALS

Chapter 1: The Texture of the Text of the New Testament

- Understand the significance and implications of the oral culture setting of the New Testament.
- Describe the physical process by which texts were produced and reproduced.
- Explain the challenges that the writing process presented to the writers.
- Explain the problems that the writing process presents to interpreters.
- Understand the impact that translation has on interpretation and modern English versions.

Chapter 2: The Literature of the New Testament

- List and describe the five major genres that make up the New Testament writings.
- Place each of the 27 New Testament writings into their proper literary category and explain why each belongs in that particular genre.
- Explain how a proper understanding of a work's genre aids the interpreter.
- Distinguish ancient biography and historiography from their modern counterparts.
- Note several features about the Gospels that suggest to some that they are legends or myths and explain why both notions are mistaken.
- Explain why "letter" may not be the best genre for understanding many of the New Testament epistles.
- Explain how the Revelation of John differs from Jewish apocalyptic writings.
- Express in one sentence the basic story that the New Testament writers tell.
- Compare and contrast the task of the New Testament writers with the task of a modern historian.

Chapter 3: Jesus of Nazareth in His Early Jewish Setting

- Understand Jesus in his early Jewish setting, both how he was like and how he differed from other first-century Jews.
- Understand the selective nature of the stories of Jesus presented in the Gospels, including particularly the absence of physical descriptions.
- List the historical evidence for the existence of Jesus and assess the value of each strand.
- Describe the earthly ministry of Jesus in terms of his theology, character traits, occupation, and mission.
- Understand the nature and function of Jesus' miracles.
- Describe the two competing and contradictory understandings of Christian origins and make a case for the traditional view.

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Chapter 4: First-Century Family Values

- Understand the importance of Alexander the Great and his empire for the study of the New Testament.
- Understand the political situation in New Testament times and the Jewish reaction to it.
- Know the primary cultural values in play in the New Testament world and how that illumines the actions and reactions of characters in the New Testament writings.

Chapter 5: The Earliest Good News—Mark's Gospel

- Know why the majority of scholars think that a non-apostle, non-eyewitness like John Mark wrote this Gospel.
- Know the characteristic features of ancient biography and assess how Mark's Gospel fares when measured according to this standard.
- Identify various subgenres within Mark's Gospel and assess their theological significance.
- Understand the connection between history and theology and assess the significance of this for understanding the arrangement of Mark's material.
- Know what is meant by the Messianic Secret theory, who conceived it, and how it relates to the notion of Mark's Gospel's having an apocalyptic character.
- Understand why Mark 8.27–30 is such a turning point in this Gospel and what is predicted thereafter.
- Know the various explanations for the abrupt ending of Mark 16.8 and why it makes a bad ending for an ancient biography, particularly the biography of Jesus.
- Briefly describe Mark's portrait of Jesus.

Chapter 6: The Most Popular Gospel of All—Matthew

- Understand what factors contributed to Matthew's Gospel's becoming the most popular Gospel of all.
- Explain why the apostle Matthew is a good candidate for authorship of the Gospel that now bears his name.
- Provide a description that includes what we can know about the audience of Matthew's Gospel.
- Discuss issues relating to the authorship, date, and geographical source of Matthew's Gospel.
- Explain what we can know about the message and intentions of Matthew's Gospel, specifically from an examination of the literary structure.
- List and describe the special contributions of Matthew's Gospel that are unique to his Gospel and make some assessments as to the theological (and perhaps sociological) implications.
- Explain how the Sermon on the Mount shows Jesus as the new Moses.
- Explain Jesus' view of the Law of Moses and assess the import of this on contemporary responses to the law.
- Explain why it matters if the virginal conception happened to Jesus' mother, Mary.
- Explain why this Gospel writer gave so much attention to Peter.
- Understand the sense in which Jesus was a sage and indeed God's wisdom come in the flesh, and explain why Matthew portrays Jesus this way.
- Describe the roles of scribes in antiquity and show how knowing them helps us better understand Matthew's Gospel and its composition.

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Chapter 7: Luke the Historian's Two-Volume Work

- Explain why most scholars believe that Luke and Acts were written by the same individual and why Luke the Beloved Physician is the most likely candidate for this role.
- Identify the evidence in Luke's Gospel that the author intended a second volume.
- Evaluate the various arguments related to the identity and role of Theophilus.
- Identify and defend several of Luke's purposes in writing Luke–Acts.
- Explain what we can know about Luke's message and intentions, specifically from an examination of the literary structure.
- Give textual evidence to support the conclusion that Luke places special importance on the role of the Holy Spirit.
- Explain how Luke fares as (a) a historian and (b) a theologian.

Chapter 8: The Last Word on Jesus—The Beloved Disciple's Testimony in the Gospel of John

- Evaluate the evidence for determining the authorship of John's Gospel.
- Analyze the arguments for the identity of "The Beloved Disciple" and his connection with the Gospel in which he is named.
- Describe the theology reflected by the structure of John's Gospel.
- List the ways in which John's Gospel is distinctive as compared to the Synoptics.
- Understand the theology reflected by the "I Am" sayings in John's Gospel.
- Explain what each of the extended dialogues that Jesus has with individuals in John's Gospel (e.g., Nicodemus, Samaritan Woman, Mary Magdalene, and Peter) contributes to our understanding of Christian belief and behavior.
- Explain how knowledge of crucifixion impacts our understanding of the historical and theological significance of Christ's atoning work.

Chapter 9: Paul—Outlines of the Life and Letters of the Apostle

- Explain why the Paul of Acts looks different from the Paul of the Pauline epistles and reconcile the corresponding portraits of the apostle.
- Produce a basic chronology of Paul's life and ministry that accounts for his major spiritual experiences, his evangelistic ministry, and his letter writing.
- Discuss the various social groups that shaped Paul's identity and evaluate the contribution of each to his worldview.
- Explain the contribution that our knowledge of ancient rhetoric makes to understanding both Paul and his letters.
- Describe the typical outline of a Pauline letter.
- Understand how and why stories function in the formation of an individual's worldview.
- Identify the five major stories that shaped Paul's worldview
- Assess the contribution of each of these five stories makes to Paul's understanding of the Gospel.
- Note the areas in which Paul's worldview is shaped by his conscious rejection of specific aspects of certain stories.

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Chapter 10: Paul the Letter Writer Part One: The Earlier Letters

- Explain the reason for the order of Paul's letters.
- Describe the answer to the Judaizing Controversy in the letter to the Galatians.
- Define how Paul uses the phrase "Law of Christ" and how it relates to the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants.
- Identify the theme of 1 and 2 Thessalonians.
- Summarize then contents of 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

Chapter 11: Paul the Letter Writer Part Two: The Capital Pauline Epistles

- Summarize Paul's relationships with the Corinthian church.
- Summarize the contents and purposes of 1 and 2 Corinthians.
- List the "credentials" of Paul's apostolic ministry.
- Discuss the role of women in the Church.
- Define the reason for the use of *insinuatio* in Romans.
- Summarize the contents of Romans.

Chapter 12: Paul the Letter Writer Part Three: The Captivity Epistles

- Discuss the use of Asiatic rhetoric used in Colossians and Ephesians.
- Understand the significance of the relationship between first-order, second-order, and third-order moral discourse and how it applies to Paul's letters.
- Summarize the contents of Colossians and Ephesians.
- Discuss the contents of Paul's use of household codes and how they relate to typical Greco-Roman household codes.
- Summarize the purposes and contents of Philemon and Philippians.
- Define the use of the V pattern in the Christological hymn in Philippians 2.
- Discuss the writing of the Pastoral Letters in relation to his imprisonments, listing the order of writing for these letters.

Chapter 13: Paul the Letter Writer Part Four: The Pastoral Epistles and the Problem of Pseudonymous Letters

- Evaluate the arguments for and against the Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Letters.
- Identify the repeated formulaic statement characteristic of the Pastoral Letters.
- Identify from where and to where Paul wrote Titus.
- Identify from where and to where Paul wrote to Timothy.
- Identify the overarching purpose and outline the contents of the Pastoral Letters.
- Discuss the keys elements of Paul's theology.
- Define the sort of rhetoric used in the Pastoral epistles and how it unlocks a better understanding of the main arguments in the Pastoral epistles.

Chapter 14: The Sermon of James the Just—Jesus' Brother

- Identify the author of the book of James as well as its recipients.
- Describe the character of the book of James.
- Discuss the issue of the canonicity of James, especially in regard to Martin Luther.
- List similarities between the teaching of James and that of Jesus.
- Compare James and Paul on the role of faith and works and assess their level of compatibility.

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Chapter 15: The Other Brother and His Eschatological Thinking—Jude

- Describe what we know about Jude from the rest of the New Testament and in particular from the Gospel of Mark and evaluate the contribution this knowledge makes to a correct understanding of his writing.
- Identify the situation of the readers of Jude and suggest a date for the book.
- Discuss possible implications of Jude's quotation from 1 Enoch.

Chapter 16: The Suffering Servant—1 Peter

- Identify the situation of the readers of 1 Peter and suggest a date for the book.
- Identify the location of Peter when he wrote 1 Peter, particularly in relation to his mention of "Babylon" in 5:13.
- Summarize what we know about the apostle Peter himself and how that impacts our understanding of 1 Peter.
- Explain how the Asiatic style of grammar and rhetoric are found in a document authored by the apostle Peter.

Chapter 17: The Sermon of the Famous Anonymous Preacher—Hebrews

- Evaluate the options for the authorship of the book of Hebrews.
- Identify the character and the location of the recipients of the book.
- Describe the differences of this book from the other New Testament letters.
- Identify the theme of the book of Hebrews and the things over which Jesus is pictured in this book as being superior.
- List some of the patterns of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11.
- Explain Hebrews 12:1–13 based on the data given in *An Invitation to the New Testament.*

Chapter 18: A Beloved Sermon and Two Elderly Letters—1–3 John

- Discuss the issue of authorship for 1 John and 2–3 John.
- Contrast the theme of 2 John with that of 3 John.
- List the three criteria of true Christian profession in 1 John.
- Discuss the "sin leading to death" in 1 Jn. 5.16f.

Chapter 19: Picking Up the Pieces, Forming Up the Canon—2 Peter

- Discuss the issues related to the authorship of 2 Peter.
- Identify the theme of 2 Peter.
- Discuss the relationship of 2 Peter and Jude.
- Analyze the contribution that 2 Peter 1 makes to an understanding of inspiration and prophecy.
- Discuss the significance of Peter's testimony of the Transfiguration in 2 Peter.

Chapter 20: Apocalypse Later—The Book of Revelation

- Describe the contents of the book of Revelation.
- Discuss how the style and vocabulary of Revelation compare with John's Gospel and letters.
- Evaluate the arguments for the date of the book.
- Describe the style of apocalyptic literature.
- Identify the repeated elements in the letters to the seven churches.
- Analyze the import of the three sets of judgments, the seals, trumpets, and bowls.

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Chapter 21: The Making of the New Testament—Did the Canon Misfire?

- Identify several stimuli to the canonization process.
- Sketch the process of canonization and evaluate the roles of the New Testament authors themselves, the church fathers, the early heretics, and the church councils.
- Evaluate the nature and scope of the early church in terms of right belief and right conduct.
- Explain how the documents that comprise the New Testament came to be set apart as divinely inspired guidelines for Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxy.
- Identify what is wrong with the theory that the early church for the first several centuries comprised equally legitimate and competing brands of Christianity, all but one of which were squelched by the decision of the Council of Nicaea under Emperor Constantine.

Appendix A: Right on Q—Are the Synoptics a Problem?

- Define and explain the synoptic problem.
- Identify and compare the contribution of the various sources for Jesus' life.
- List and evaluate the options on the source criticism of the Gospels.

Appendix B:

- Discuss the concept of intellectual property in antiquity.
- Discuss whether the practice of pseudonymous letters was acceptable amongst the earliest Christians.

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READING SUMMARIES

Chapter 1:
The Texture of the Text of the New Testament

Chapter Summary

The Text

Ancient Greek manuscripts typically were written in all capital letters, with little or no spacing between words, sentences, or paragraphs, little or no guides to punctuation, and no headings or chapter and verse markers. This presents interpreters with a hermeneutical hurdle as every English version is already an interpretation of the Greek text.

The Material Used

Most documents in the New Testament world were written on sheets of papyrus, a reed found in marshes of the Nile River. Preparing papyrus sheets for writing was a laborious and expensive process. Parchment, a second but much less common type of writing material, was scraped from animal hides. Parchment was more durable than papyrus, but was heavier to carry around. Both tended to rot in humid climates and thus more were discovered in Egypt than Galilee due to the less humid climate. Only 10–20 percent of the people (usually the socially elite and wealthy) could read and write, two different skills.

Why a Continuous Flow of Letters?

The rationale for a continuous flow of letters in ancient documents was largely a matter of economics. Ancient documents were not normally produced for the public; they were produced for patrons, or clients, or libraries of and for the wealthy. Rather than restricting their message to an elite few, the New Testament writers were compelled to share the Gospel, even, and perhaps especially, with the disenfranchised. To bridge this gap, Christian writers used a lector, a literate reader who already knew the document and read it out loud to a whole congregation. Key examples of this fact include Revelation 1:3 and Mark 13:14.

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The Oral and Rhetorical World of the New Testament

All of the ancient cultures of the Biblical world were oral cultures, not cultures based on texts! The oral word was primary, and documents were entirely secondary. The oral nature of the culture shaped the way people wrote and read documents. Especially when writers wanted to persuade someone about something, they used all the oral and rhetorical tools available to them to convince, convict, and convert people to follow Jesus Christ.

Implications

Every English translation is already an interpretation of the Greek original text, so interpreters must take care not merely to interpret the text of an English translation but, insofar as is possible, to work with the underlying Greek original text as some things get lost in translation. Readers unschooled in Greek should regularly consult several translations because the differences will identify the places where the original Greek itself presents interpretive options.

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Chapter 2:
The Literature of The New Testament?

Chapter Summary

Introduction

Recognizing a work's genre is the most fundamental key to interpreting its contents. The New Testament displays at least five different genres in their whole (ancient biography, ancient history, prophecy, letters, sermons) and contains various subgenres (e.g., parables, encomia). Writers typically provide genre signals within the first few sentences, and the New Testament writers are no exception.

What Are the Gospels (and Acts)?

Some suggest that the Gospels are akin to ***modern*** biography or historiography, but the Gospels are not chronologically ordered "womb to tomb" accounts, and they (with the very minor exception of Luke) show almost no interest at all in linking the micro-history of Jesus and his followers with the macro-history of Judaism or the Greco-Roman world. Nevertheless, the Gospels and Acts do have much in common with the biography- and history-writing conventions of their day; they are selective and anecdotal, and they intend to persuade their audiences to a particular way of belief and behavior, and they do so in an entertaining way.

Some scholars suggest that the Gospels are written more like ancient legends or myths, but the evidence argues against this. Legends are written centuries after the stories have outlived the people they chronicled. Any eyewitnesses who could object to the account where it went wrong, for expanding the stories in legendary ways, were silenced centuries ago. The Gospels were written within the lifetime of many of the eyewitnesses of the ministry of Jesus; they are, therefore, not like ancient legends.

Nor are the Gospels like ancient mythological stories either; they are telling a tale about a historical "here and now" person, Jesus of Nazareth, who died the most shameful form of death known in antiquity. This is not the stuff of which legends or myths or heroes are made in antiquity. Thus, we are safest to conclude that *the Gospel writers were following the ancient biographical and historiographical conventions and genre of their day in writing about Jesus*.

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What about the "Letters" of the New Testament?

Viewed as poor substitutes for the author's personal presence, letters were to a large extent "oral texts"—texts meant to be read out loud and heard as an expression of the living voice. Most letters were very ordinary and brief. With the exception of 2–3 John, New Testament "letters" are much longer, and, apart from the addressor/addressee parts and initial or closing greetings, they are far more like rhetorical discourses or sermons than like ancient letters. Nineteen of the twenty-one so-called letters of the New Testament are NOT like ordinary ancient letters.

In the End, Apocalypse

Some view the Revelation of John as a history disguised in the form of prophecy typical of early Jewish *apocalyptic* documents, but this will not fly. We know the actual author's name, John, and he is literally speaking about his and his audience's own present and their eventual future, including the final future when Christ returns. Revelation, best categorized as apocalyptic prophecy, sums up all the different kinds of literature that came earlier in the New Testament, for it is one part story, one part history, one part visionary prophecy, one part letter, and one part exhortation or sermon, all of which are presented with the use of amazing apocalyptic images and symbolic numbers.

What Is the Story the New Testament Seeks to Tell?

Underlying the entire New Testament is the story of how God came in the person of his Son to redeem all of humanity. All the New Testament writers connect the story of Jesus to the Old Testament, which they viewed as inspired, sacred stories suitable for learning the truth about God and for training in righteousness. These writers insist that Jesus is the fulfillment of all these previous stories. They all agree that "his story" is true "history," indeed the most important history of all, a history that changed and is changing the world.

What Sort of History Is This?

Modern history pontifically rules divine activity "out of bounds." This bold axiom is hailed as an "advancement" wrought by the Enlightenment; it was not the approach of ancient historiographers. Herodotus, the father of all history writing, was perfectly comfortable talking about the role of the Divine in human affairs. The New Testament writers followed suit. Since Jesus is both divine and human, and since the whole Bible is the story of God's dealings with and relationship with humanity, the best description of the New Testament is *theological history*.

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But the theological history of the New Testament writers differs from modern histories in another important way: It not only looks at the past and the writer's present, but also projects implications for the future. The New Testament writers believed that Christ's history was the believer's destiny; believers will experience resurrection just as Jesus did.

Implications

In order to understand the New Testament, you need to enter into the world of these writers sympathetically and give their writings a fair hearing, whether this is part of your faith or not. Sometimes it is necessary to divest one's self of certain ideas and presuppositions and feelings before reading an important document. Be fair and open-minded as you read this textbook. It is the necessary presupposition of any good or fair reading of a text that one approach the text without prejudice; indeed, it is better to approach the text with a certain curiosity and sympathy and a willingness to learn and be surprised, giving the writers the benefit of the doubt as you read.

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Chapter 3:
Jesus of Nazareth in His Early Jewish Setting

Chapter Summary

Introduction

The Gospels give us four portraits (not photographs!) of the character of Jesus; they are interpretations of what kind of person he was—not what he "looked like." The Gospel writers use primarily the remembered and collected words and deeds of Jesus to reveal his person and character; their emphases are reflected in the events they select.

Did Jesus Even Exist?

We have more evidence for the existence of Jesus of Nazareth than for almost any other comparable figure from that era. We have Jewish (Josephus), Roman (Tacitus), and Christian (New Testament) evidence that he was a real person. We have more copies of very ancient Christian manuscripts referring to Jesus than of manuscripts referring to any other comparable historical figure.

What Manner of Man Was He?

Jesus was born a Jew (somewhere between 2 and 6 B.C.), and he lived in a highly Jewish environment in Jewish ways. He was well schooled in the Mosaic law. Doctrinally, he had most in common with the Jewish sect known as the Pharisees, although, like the Sadducees, he questioned their use of and dependence on their oral traditions. Jesus' frequent castigation of the Pharisees had little to do with their doctrine but much to do with their practice.

In view of the large temporal lacuna from Jesus' birth/infancy until the beginning of his public ministry, we know very little about nearly 90 percent of his life. Nevertheless, we can construct a reasonably secure grid with which to process his earthly ministry by extrapolating assumptions from the nearly incontrovertible details that we do have.

He was born into a devout Jewish family, so it is safe to assume he had a background and training similar to almost all other Jewish males of his day. His father was an artisan, working in wood and (more probably) stone, so he was not a peasant. Neither was he uneducated. He learned a trade. He likely learned to communicate in several languages in order to do business in the community; he could

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read (unlike 90 percent of the rest of the general population). In addition to apprenticeship under his father in masonry or carpentry, Jesus would have received instruction in Torah. Outdoing religious leaders in debate indicates that his mind was sharp and quick, and so likely he was at least of above-average intelligence. He was a remarkable teacher and healer. He avoided "performing miracles" on cue, or for a show, or for self-aggrandizement, or for manipulation. He constantly displayed an "others-centered," selfless attitude. He endured humiliation and excruciating pain by dying on the cross.

But Jesus is more than historical; he came from "beyond history," and he has returned to "beyond history." His "departure," or resurrection/ascension, is the ONLY reasonable "X" in the equation between the despair from his death to the rise and expansion of the Christian community. This was the mission he lived and fulfilled!

What Is a Miracle?

Miracles are best understood not as "violations" of natural laws but as out-of-the-ordinary events that are not explicable on the basis of normal processes of causation or "natural law." The New Testament writers believe that God on occasion goes "above" and "beyond" the natural processes to accomplish his purposes. The proper posture when encountering accounts of miracles in the Scriptures should include both open-mindedness and critical judgment. Some "miracle" MAY be explicable today in terms of cause-and-effect relationships because of our advanced scientific progress. So we should not plot the miracles of Jesus in the category of "myth" and attribute them to his pious followers' transformation of the Jesus of history into the Christ of faith. The Jesus of history and the Christ of faith are the same Being, the second person of the Holy Trinity. That is the unanimous conviction of New Testament writers.

Were There "Lost Christianities"?

Two competing and contradictory understandings of Christian origins chart the landscape of current New Testament scholarship: (1) the traditional view, namely, that the movement was largely unified and maintained a shared core of convictions about belief and behavior; and (2) what we might call the "lost Christianities" view, namely, that early Christianity took a myriad of forms and involved a wide diversity of beliefs from the beginning.

The traditional view has BY FAR the "lion's share" of the turf. It is the more viable because the earliest followers of Jesus had a strong sense of orthodoxy and orthopraxy that they retained from their

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Jewish heritage. They had a unified, orthodox set of Scriptures in their Hebrew Bible. The competing Christianities (e.g., the Gnostic strand) emerged much later, in the second century, dependent on and in reaction against the standard, traditional, unified, and orthodox Christian doctrine. As for the "in-house" disputes we read about in the New Testament, none appears to have been over doctrine, only over praxis.

The social networks of earliest Christianity were small and close-knit, and the spectrum of beliefs of this minority religious group was not broad throughout the New Testament period. This did not change until the second and third centuries, when Gentile Christians outnumbered their Jewish brethren and brought their non-Jewish ideas, voices, and prejudices against things Jewish.

In short, there was diversity in early Christianity when it came to approaches to praxis as Christians tried to unite Jews and Gentiles into one coherent fellowship of believers, but the notion that there was a wide variety of theological and ethical viewpoints in early Christianity about the essentials is historically false, and the New Testament itself is the proof of this.

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Chapter 4:
First-Century Family Values

Chapter Summary

Introduction

The history of Israel is one of domination by foreign powers—Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. The Holy Land was a political football tossed back and forth as the prize between one empire and another. Greeks had the greatest impact. The major legacy of Alexander the Great was the thorough inculcation of Greek culture throughout the known world—Olympic-style games, Greek-style buildings, Greek theater productions, and the Greek language. Jesus lived in a world where Aramaic was the main spoken tongue, Hebrew and Greek were both written and read, and Latin was the official language of jurisprudence in the province of Judea, but Greek united all.

Jews were under foreign rule during the time of Jesus. Judea was run directly by a Roman governor, Galilee was under puppet king Herod Antipas (Idumean). Devout Jews felt their land was unclean, and they constantly needed to purify themselves. Their way of life was threatened. Zealots protested a census that would lead to more taxes. Essenes set up a base camp at the Dead Sea, awaiting God's judgment.

The thought world also changed from Old Testament to New Testament. Apocalyptic writings proliferated. Prophetic books all but disappeared. Wisdom literature flourished. Religious sects blossomed. Jesus challenged all of them. Prophetic figures like Jesus and John the Baptizer were closely watched, challenged, debated, and finally executed.

Greek language and culture impacted Jews deeply. Jesus and his disciples likely had oral and aural familiarity with Greek; Jesus conversed with Pilate, and Peter with Cornelius; the whole New Testament is written in Greek. Jews reclined (Greek style) on couches for a formal meal, and they studied Greek philosophy and rhetoric. The Old Testament was translated into Greek; numerous New Testament writers quote from the LXX instead of the Hebrew Bible. A plethora of Jewish writings emerged, written *mainly in Greek*.

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Social History and Ordinary Life

Greco-Roman life was guided by several key cultural values. First and foremost was honor and shame. People did whatever it took to avoid shame and achieve honor. Patriarchy was a close second: Fathers arranged marriages; divorce was a male privilege; only women were required to be chaste; women could not inherit property; political power, military service, and education (much less leadership!) were almost exclusively male. Wives raised children, cooked, and cleaned. Husbands worked, performed the religious ceremonies, and promoted the public honor of the family. Third, Greco-Roman cultures were collectivist, not individualist; identities were determined (at birth) not by the ways they stood out from the crowd (viewed as "abnormal"), but by what crowd they were part of (geography, gender, generation, guild). Names illustrate: Jesus of Nazareth, Simon son of John, Simon the Pharisee, Simon the tanner, James the less, Pliny the elder. Change was viewed negatively. That Jesus was changing peoples' lives and calling them from their livelihoods was radical.

A fourth life-organizing value in the Greco-Roman world was religion. Religious activity was always political activity and often potentially politically dangerous activity, and so it was regulated. The Romans basic policy was to leave indigenous religion alone, so long as it did not disturb the social order. Judaism was a recognized and sanctioned religion. Jews did not have to sacrifice to the emperor. Instead, they made prayers for the emperor. New religions were considered a "*superstitio,*" a superstition and an illegal religion. When early Christianity emerged from the womb of Judaism and officials realized that this was not just another form of Judaism, a sanctioned religion, it was open season on Christians.

A fifth life-organizing cultural value was reciprocity. The Roman Empire consisted of barter economies. Getting ahead in life was a matter of reciprocity and patronage. A poor person (85–90 percent) sought to become a client of a more well-to-do person. The client's role was to praise the patron and, in certain situations, to help the patron get elected to important offices; the patron's role was to bankroll the client so that he could survive. Money had a limited and very specific function—it was used to pay taxes, tolls, and tribute money. *It thus had strong negative associations for subjugated peoples like Jews.* Coins were not just means of exchange; they were propaganda pieces.

The sixth major cultural value is the concept of "limited good." Ancient peoples did not live in a world full of abundance. That they thought in terms of "limited good" is hardly surprising. They realized that there is only a limited number of goods and property to go around. If one man had a vineyard and another didn't, then, in a world of limited arable land, the only way the second person

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could have a vineyard was if he bought or stole the vineyard. The only way some people could survive was to “beg, borrow, or steal” something that belonged to others.

Implications

The social history of a period is important, perhaps even more important than the political history, for interpretation. The New Testament becomes clearer when original contexts are understood and considered in interpretation. Simply summarized, a text without a context is just a pretext for what you want it to mean.

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Chapter 5:
The Earliest Good News—Mark's Gospel

Chapter Summary

Introduction

The Gospels share many characteristics of ancient biographies; they are tendentious; they offer no psychological analysis; they offer little overt commentary but show the character of a person through the subject's words and deeds; they give no notation of their sources; they are anecdotal and only broadly chronological; they stress the subject's superiority, emphasize his manner of death, offer his legacy. Mark's Gospel well fits these criteria.

The term "Gospel" first meant the oral proclamation of Good News about Jesus (cf. Acts and 1 Th. 2.13). This proclamation was never seen as merely personal opinion about Jesus; it was God's revelation of the truth about Jesus

Who Was Mark, and When Did He Write?

The first written Gospel was composed by John Mark, a sometime co-missionary of his cousin Barnabas and the apostles Paul and Peter. Mark lived in Jerusalem with his mother, whose house became an early Christian meeting place—Acts 12.12. He served as Peter's interpreter and wrote down what amounts to Peter's memoirs about Jesus. He was concerned (1) not to leave out anything he heard and remembered that Peter said and (2) not to say anything false about Jesus.

Mark likely wrote his Gospel before the A.D. 70 cataclysm. He records Jesus' prediction of the demise of the Temple but gives only the broad, apocalyptic imagery—no details such as would be expected if written after the event had already happened. His note to the lector implies that the destruction is near, but how near is not clear. The incipient concern over Rome's response to Jewish unrest was no doubt years, perhaps a decade, in the making. Witherington suggests Mark's Gospel appeared around A.D. 68; others have pushed it back as far as the early 50s.

How Is Mark's Gospel Arranged?

Mark gives a broadly chronological order (baptism, beginning of ministry, Passion week, death and resurrection of Jesus), but this Gospel has a theological order to it, as follows: (1) questions raised

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about Jesus' identity (Mark 1.1–8.26); (2) a dramatic turning point, Peter's confession (Mark 8.27–30); (3) mission explained, suffering, demise, and resurrection (8:31–10:45); (4) Passion and Easter narratives (Mark 11–16).

Brief Contents of Mark's Gospel

Jesus' regular commands to silence in Mark's narrative have engendered no small controversy. In a hypothesis he labeled "the messianic secret," William Wrede explained the presence of these silence commands as the intentional reconstruction of history by later pious followers of Jesus to explain why he wasn't recognized as the Messiah during his earthly ministry; put simply, he kept telling people not to divulge his messianic identity. The evidence is not as lopsided as Wrede supposed. At equally regular points, in fact, Jesus actually commands proclamation. To account for this, Witherington argues that Mark is telling Jesus' story from an apocalyptic point of view, wherein seasons of misunderstanding are punctuated by key revelatory moments. He notes that the commands to silence at particular junctures are balanced with commands to publication or proclamation *after one gains understanding*. The silence commands reveal that Jesus wants to let people know who he is on his own timetable and on his own terms. He does not wish to be pigeonholed into a bunch of preconceived messianic categories.

The Presentation of and Reflection on Christ in Mark

The key to Mark's Christology is his focus on Jesus' self-designation, the phrase "Son of Man." Jesus was not using the phrase simply as a circumlocution for "I" or for "a man in my position." Rather, Mark is reading the story of Jesus in light of Daniel 7.13–14. The Son of Man figure in Daniel 7 is truly human and divine. Mark's Gospel brings out both of these in Jesus' Son of Man sayings.

Marking Time

Markan time markers are Einsteinian; they are all about relativity. Mark's ubiquitous "immediately" rarely carries a literal sense; rather, it means something like "next" or "after that." Many of the time references in the Bible are general time references, not specific ones. Ancient peoples did not run around with little sundials on their wrists worrying about hours and seconds, unlike modern persons. Many of the supposed chronological or time contradictions in the New Testament disappear when we take into account the general and generic ways ancients talked about time.

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The Kingdom Comes with Teaching and Healing

Jesus' ministry was characterized by healing and teaching, and both are connected to the coming of the Kingdom of God. Mark "front-loaded" miracle stories in his account. His portrait of Jesus is one of power and authority over nature, diseases, demons, and death. Curiously, this power is ALWAYS at the service of someone else, never for self-aggrandizement or self-interest. His ministry involved setting people free from what plagued them, either spiritual or physical maladies. Each act was a sign of God's saving reign breaking into that world.

In spite of the relative dearth of Jesus' teaching material (small parable collection in chapters 4 and 12 plus an eschatological discourse in chapter 13), Mark's narrative does indeed emphasize Jesus' role as a teacher. In contrast to his treatment of the miracle component of Jesus' ministry, Mark has chosen mostly to "tell" rather than "show" the teaching component. He tells his audience frequently that Jesus was teaching, that he taught with authority, and that people were amazed at his teaching; but, apart from a few parables, he doesn't deliver much of the actual content of Jesus' teaching (no Sermon on the Mount).

Parables were not unique to Jesus; what was unique was (1) the frequency with which he employed them and (2) the subject matter, namely, the kingdom of God and its arrival in the ministry of Jesus (as opposed to illustrations of some ethical principle).

The Dramatic, Surprise Ending of Mark's Gospel

The earliest and best manuscripts of Mark's Gospel end in fright and flight at 16:8. But ancient biographies in antiquity concluded with the hero of the biography vindicated and his legacy praised. If this Gospel did not dramatically reverse the horrific tale of Jesus on the cross, it would not have been seen as ending with Good News about Jesus. It would have suggested Jesus was a criminal and certainly not the Son of God, as the centurion says beneath the cross. The proper conclusion is that the original ending of Mark's Gospel is lost, and the second-century church tried to fix the problem by creating at least two or possibly three proper conclusions to this ancient biography.

Implications

First-century Jews and, even more, first-century Gentiles, were not looking for a crucified savior figure. That was an oxymoron. Had Jesus not been vindicated after he was crucified, it is doubtful anyone would have been trying to tell the difficult tale of the Good News about a crucified man. Mark, however, did tell such a tale, and remarkably he told it in the wake of the brutal deaths of two of his

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early Christian heroes—Peter and Paul in Rome. This took both courage and faith. It also took knowledge of the fact that Jesus appeared to his disciples after his death

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Chapter 6:
The Most Popular Gospel—Matthew

Chapter Summary

Introduction

Matthew has always occupied the first position in any collection that contained the Gospels. That the most Jewish Gospel became the most popular Gospel even as the early church became predominately Gentile, is another of history's ironies. Several factors explain Matthew's appeal: Peter's leadership role; instructions on church order; introductory genealogy; birth narratives; the Sermon on the Mount; comprehensive appearances of Jesus; that it was fit for teaching and discipling; and its early codex form.

Describing a Scribe

Why is it this Gospel ascribed to a relatively minor and more obscure disciple named Matthew? Was the name pulled out of an "apostolic hat" to lift the credibility of the work? This notion is misguided, for a number of reasons: First, papyrus rolls had name tags, and the Gospel writers were likely members of the community for whom they wrote, so it is reasonable to presume that the audiences knew very well who wrote them. Second, if they sought to lift the credibility of the work, would they really have picked Mark, Luke, and Matthew? Mark and Luke were neither original disciples of Jesus nor eyewitnesses of his ministry, and they may not have actually seen the risen Jesus; Matthew is only a minor figure in the New Testament, and he carried a social stigma because of his former occupation. No one would attribute a Gospel to someone like this unless he had actually had something to do with its composition.

Papias wrote (H.E. 3.39.16), "Now Matthew compiled the words in a Hebrew dialect (i.e., Aramaic)." This implies that Matthew could write. But is Papias referring to a full Gospel here or a collection of Jesus' sayings in Aramaic? If it was the full Gospel, why does he (an apostle) incorporate more than 90 percent of Mark's Gospel (a nonapostolic source)? One proposal is that Matthew had no reservations about using Mark since it was based on the testimony of Peter. Perhaps more reasonable is the view that Matthew composed stories and sayings of Jesus in Aramaic and that a scribe later combined Matthew's material (which may have included Q) with Mark's, translating all into Greek.

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Attributing the final document to its apostolic source is neither forgery nor deception. This theory fits with the ancient role of scribes who were trained to bring things together into a coherent whole.

The Audience, Date, and Character of Matthew's Gospel

Matthew's Gospel clearly has a Jewish audience in mind. In it, more than in any of the other Gospels, Jesus specifically assails Jewish ideas and practices (cf. Mt. 23, where the entire chapter shows Jesus denouncing the scribes and the Pharisees). Another clue lies in Matthew's habit of replacing "Kingdom of God" with its equivalent "Kingdom of Heaven," in deference to the Jews' reverence of the divine name. The specific locale of Matthew's Jewish audience is less certain than their ethnicity. Two main contenders are (Syrian) Antioch or in Galilee itself, likely Capernaum (Peter's house-church). The precise date is also subject to debate. Witherington suggests the later 70s or so, after the Gospel of Mark has circulated more widely.

Matthew's Theological Structure

Matthew has clearly organized his Gospel around alternating blocks of narrative and teaching sections. The teaching blocks are numbered either at five or six. Many insist on five because they see Jesus being compared with Moses (Pentateuch). Matthew also wants to present Jesus as a great sage, greater even than Solomon. But who could be greater than they as a teacher of Israel? The answer is Wisdom come in the flesh, or as Matthew puts it, "God with us" (Immanuel).

Matthew's Special Contributions to the Story of Jesus

Matthew's Gospel reads like a discipleship manual for Jewish Christians. It is concerned about Christology (who Jesus was and his significance), discipleship (what it takes to follow him), and community (how the group of followers should relate to one another and to outsiders, like other Jews). Matthew's initial and foundational answer to the Christology question comes in the form of a genealogy.

Far more than simply assuaging people's curiosity about Jesus' ancestry, Matthew's genealogy is nothing short of a theological salvo: Jesus is traced through Joseph's line, yet he has no biological father! He is born by miraculous "overshadowing," yet he has some "shady" relatives in his family tree, individuals that historically find no place in Jewish genealogies, namely, women. And this means not just any women, but women with social and moral strikes against them: Rahab (a prostitute), Ruth (a Gentile), and "the wife of Uriah" (an adulteress). And then there is Mary—in Joseph's genealogy!

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Matthew's genealogy attacks on a third front: It deliberately leaves out names and whole groups of names so that it comes up with a perfect three sets of fourteen generations, or, put another way, Jesus is the seventh son of a seventh son of a seventh son of King David, whose very Hebrew name adds up to the number 14 according to the Jewish way of turning Hebrew letters into numbers. In early Jewish numerology, 7 is the number of perfection. Matthew wants us to know that Jesus is in the royal line of David and that God works through "irregularities," and irregular unions in the royal genealogy.

The Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 5–7 is the most influential collection of theological ethics anywhere—the quintessential teaching of Jesus. But this is not an ethic for those who are not followers of Jesus. The topics are not new; they were discussed by Jewish sages for ages. What is different is that Jesus takes an eschatological or Kingdom perspective on these topics, and in some cases he intensifies the demands (for example, prohibiting adultery in the heart). What is also different is the counter-order wisdom Jesus sometimes offers; for example, he prohibits oath, whereas Moses allowed it.

Jesus is not trying to offer a utopian ethic. He believes that God's fresh outpouring of salvation and grace enables his followers to embrace and to walk through a narrow gate and follow a straighter path in life. The blessings often come not now but later, when the Kingdom comes fully on earth.

Jesus didn't abolish the law. The law is always in force. If sin, then death. This always applies. But Christ has fulfilled the law on our behalf. He has fulfilled the role Israel was to play of being the obedient Son and the light to one and all, and so now obedience to the new covenant has to do with pleasing Christ and emulating his character and behavior.

"The Lord's Prayer," or more properly "The Disciples' Prayer," urges a daily focus on the Kingdom principles expounded in the Sermon on the Mount. The prayer identifies the types of concerns we should bring before God as well as the manner in which we should bring the requests.

The Peter Principle

Matthew devotes more space than any of the other Gospels to Simon Peter, who is named after a Jewish war hero who helped liberate Israel for an all-too-brief century. Matthew adds that Jesus nicknamed Simon *Cephas*, which in Greek is Petros. But Cephas is not a proper name; it means "rock." So, Simon is called "Rocky" by Jesus. But what did the moniker mean? As solid as rock? or "rock hard, stubborn, hardheaded"? Simon Peter was both. Matthew also adds the account of Peter walking on the water; it was a very short walk . . . but he DID walk on the water!

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In addition to these snippets about Peter, Matthew adds the account where Jesus tells Peter to go fishing for the temple tax (Mt. 17.24–27) and Peter's query as to how many times a person needs to forgive an offender (Mt. 18.21). The special Matthean material found in the birth narratives and in the special Peter stories likely goes back to the Holy family and to Peter himself.

The Grand Finale

Matthew's version of the Passion narrative is dramatic in nature. Naming a few of the key events, Jesus makes a grand entrance into Jerusalem, cleanses the temple, heals, curses the fig tree, and his authority is challenged. Matthew heightens the tensions by increasing the amount of challenges to Jesus when compared to the Markan account. In the account of the Passover meal, Matthew portrays Jesus as already seeing his death as an atoning sacrifice for sin. Another unique feature includes the presence of the guards at the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea where Jesus' body was laid. At Jesus' appearance, the guards bow before him and worship him. Meanwhile, an angel gives the Easter message to the female disciples and commissions them to go and tell. Witherington describes the story as dark and dramatic and emphasizes that Jesus is in charge of every step. In summary, one does not make up a story about a crucified Messiah and expect a world religion to start. Especially, one would not make up women as key witnesses. This is hardly a tale that has been made up.

Implications

The Gospel ends with the transition of power from Jesus to his disciples—commissioning them to go and make disciples of all nations. The church has been scrambling ever since to fulfill these famous last words of the risen Jesus. If one wants to understand both the theological vigor and the ethical rigor of Jesus, this Gospel is a good place to start.

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Chapter 7:
Luke the Historian's Two-Volume Work—Luke–Acts

Chapter Summary

Luke's Hellenistic, yet Jewish, Historical Approach to Jesus and "the Way"

Luke's Gospel is the longest of the canonical Gospels, and it has a sequel—Acts, which is nearly as long (together about one-third of the New Testament). Each is about the length typical of ancient historiographies, and both would not fit together on one papyrus roll. Luke likely intended two separate volumes to his work. Luke left literary clues in his Gospel that he *intended* to write a second volume. Luke and Acts should be read as ancient historiography.

Who Was Theophilus?

"Theophilus" is probably not intended as a cipher for "lovers of God" in general, since it is prefaced with "o noble . . .", an epithet that Luke elsewhere uses ONLY for high-ranking Roman officials. Luke is writing to (and for) his patron, a recently converted, high-status Gentile and his reading circle of Christians (with a wider audience in view).

Who Was Luke?

Strong evidence points the authorship of Luke–Acts to Luke, the missionary co-worker of the apostle Paul (Muratorian Canon, Irenaeus' Against Heresies, Philemon 24, Colossians 4:14, and the "we passages" in Acts). In fact, the testimony about Luke–Acts from both the manuscript evidence and the church fathers is basically unanimous.

Date of Composition

Since Luke–Acts is written after "many" have undertaken to give an account of the things that have happened in the life of Jesus and perhaps in the earliest days of the early Christian movement, we should probably not put Luke's chronicles any earlier than the 80s A.D., after Mark and the sayings source called Q by scholars and Matthew have been written.

The Logical and Theological Structuring of Luke–Acts

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Operating like an ancient historian, Luke arranges his Gospel according to his sources. This approach differs from that of Matthew, who alternates between narrative and teaching. We probably do better to see Luke not as *correcting* earlier accounts of Jesus that he mentions in his preface but as *interpreting the significance* of the life and ministry of Jesus for his audience. Specifically, Luke arranges his history to show *that* and *how* the Gospel spread ethnically (from Jews to all peoples), sociologically (from least to greatest), and geographically (from Jerusalem to the entire Empire). His Gospel focuses more on the vertical (social scale) universalizing of the Gospel, while Acts focuses more on its horizontal universalizing (to all peoples).

The Gospel of the Holy Spirit

Luke stresses the role of the Holy Spirit in both his books. The Holy Spirit is the agent who empowers Jesus as well as the disciples for preaching, teaching, and healing. He is the key that makes proclamation, salvation, liberation, and strenuous discipleship possible. The Gospel's liberation is to affect every aspect of life. Such a total salvation requires a total response of discipleship.

Two paradigmatic sermons set up the narratives that follow them—Jesus' sermon in Lk. 4 and Peter's in Acts 2. Luke structured this material such that the subsequent narratives demonstrate how the Scriptures he cites there, namely, Is. 61.1–2 (Luke 4) and Joel 2 (Acts 2)—both relating the Spirit's anointing—are fulfilled. Thus in Luke we see Jesus' entire ministry operating under the anointing of the Spirit. In Acts, Luke cites the prophecy in Joel about the outpouring of the Spirit on "all flesh" and follows up with narratives that demonstrate the Spirit changing the lives of men and women and inspiring them to speak God's word in various ways and settings.

Luke seeks to legitimize Christianity by demonstrating the Jewish origins of Christianity and by emphasizing the divine providence that was reflected in every aspect of the development and expansion of the church. But there is more to it than that. Luke wants to make clear that Christianity is the outworking of God's divine salvation plan since the beginning of salvation history and the writing of the ancient Scriptures at least, if not before.

Luke's Views of Jesus

Luke offers a potpourri of Christological ideas without melding them all together. As a historian (albeit a theologically oriented historian), he is representing the variety he found in his sources. The issue is not who Jesus is, but the variety of roles that he fulfills and when he fulfills them. These roles are

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reflected in the various titles used of Jesus. Two key watershed events that separate these roles are (1) the resurrection–ascension complex and (2) Pentecost. Some titles, for example "Lord," are found almost exclusively in post-ascension narratives. Other titles, for example, "Son of Man" and "Christ," denote multiple roles at different times (both suffering and coming in glory).

R. H. Fuller's summary of the Christology in Luke–Acts shows that Luke is thinking historically about these matters. At Jesus' birth, he is destined and made able by nature and pedigree to be the Messiah. At baptism, he assumes the mantle of eschatological prophet. At death, he is King and suffering-servant Messiah. But he does not completely fulfill any of the major titles Son of Man, Son of God, Savior, or Lord until he is exalted.

Luke is a first-rate theologian. His work superbly integrates history, theology, ethics, rhetoric, and religious praxis. He offers a considerable theology of the Holy Spirit as he strives to show the continuity between the ministry of Jesus in saving people and the ministry of his earliest followers thereafter, also empowered by the Spirit to preach, teach, and heal. His exaltation Christology is profound, for he believes that a historical series of events—the death, resurrection, and Pentecost events—changed the world, formed a community, impelled a mission, fulfilled numerous prophecies, and challenged ancient religions, ranging from Judaism to pagan religions of various sorts.

Synopsis of the Content of Luke-Acts

Fifty percent of Mark is found in Luke's Gospel. Luke as an ancient historian has a specific focus. The story begins and ends in Jerusalem and original material speckles this geographical trajectory. This includes several unique parables and stories. In addition, L material can be found in the Passion narrative including the note that Jerusalem will be surrounded by armies before the destruction of the Temple, the argument about who was the greatest disciple and the conversation between Jesus and the revolutionaries who hung on their crosses. Luke ends with Jesus' disciples being tasked to wait in Jerusalem until the Spirit falls on them to empower them. This is precisely where Acts picks up. The Word of God spreads through the ministries of Peter and Paul whose successes and failures are told in Acts. Paul is portrayed as a missionary. This fits the evangelical purpose of Acts and for this reason there is no mention of Paul as a letter writer in Luke–Acts.

Implications

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As the only true example of the genre of ancient historiography in the New Testament, Luke–Acts will always stick out like something of a canonical “sore thumb.” Interrupting the two volumes with the Gospel of John risks missing the continuity in Lukan theology and pneumatology. Switching the order to Matthew, Mark, Luke–Acts, John interrupts the ancient biographical genre followed by Matthew, Mark, and John. The order John, Matthew, Mark, Luke–Acts resolves both issues, but breaking the traditional order is a rough furrow to plow.

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Chapter 8:

The Last Word on Jesus: The Beloved Disciple's Testimony in the Gospel of John

Chapter Summary

The author devotes a full quarter of his discussion on John's Gospel to the authorship issue (1) since it contains direct reference to the one/s responsible for its content ("the beloved disciple," cf. John 19.26 & 35; and 21.24), (2) since early church fathers were not unanimous on authorship, and (3) since the Beloved Disciple may not himself be responsible for the final form of this document.

First Things

The problem with the view that John son of Zebedee is the author is chiefly that it favors the external evidence afforded by church tradition *over* the internal evidence in the Gospel itself. The majority opinion of the church fathers is questionable since many of them may have blindly followed the dictum of Irenaeus, who had an apologetic interest in associating the Gospel with the apostle John. In any case, church tradition should not be given precedence over internal data found in the text itself. Your textbook argues that much of the material found in John's Gospel comes from the eyewitness testimony of Lazarus and that a later disciple, perhaps John the elder (either presbyter or "old man") or his community (cf. the "we" in John 21) is responsible for the final compilation. This hypothesis accounts for many of the differences between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics (e.g., the absence of the Zebedee stories, exorcisms, parables, and Galilean miracles as well as the unique contributions of Judean miracles, such as the healing of the paralytic, the healing of the man born blind, the raising of Lazarus, and the conversations between Jesus and Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman) and makes better sense of the rumor that the beloved disciple would not die (John 21.23). Perhaps most of all, though, if we are wondering why in this Gospel alone there is such an emphasis on Jesus as the author and guardian of life (John 1:4) and as the Resurrection and Life (John 11;25); perhaps it is because the testimony in this Gospel is by someone whom Jesus raised from the dead. It is not *impossible* that John son of Zebedee had something to do with this Gospel. However, no theory explains more of the unique features of this Gospel than equating Lazarus with the Beloved Disciple.

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The Theological Structure of the Fourth Gospel

There is an overall "V" pattern to the telling of the story of Jesus in this Gospel: He came down from heaven, lived among us, and went back up to heaven. Within this structure is a double crescendo: a crescendo of miracles (from winemaking to raising the dead) and a crescendo of confessions about Jesus (from Passover lamb to God).

The Fourth Gospel has a simple structure in four parts: (1) Prologue; (2) Book of Signs; (3) Book of Glory; (4) Epilogue. Within this macrostructure are seven sign narratives, seven "I Am" sayings, and seven discourses tagged to the "I Am" sayings. Since seven is the symbolic number in early Judaism for perfection, this Gospel is stressing that the Perfect One, the Savior of the World, has finally come.

A Closer Look: The I Am Sayings

The seven "I Am" sayings are: (1) THE bread of life (6.35 cf. vss. 41,48,51); (2) THE light of the world (8.12 cf. vss. 18, 23); (3) THE gate of the sheep (10, 7, 9); (4) THE good shepherd (10.11, 14); (5) THE resurrection and the life (11.25); (6) THE way, the truth, and the life (14.6); (7) THE true vine (15.1, 5). These sayings not only link the Book of Signs with the Book of Glory, but show Christ as the Wisdom of God, as the revealer of everlasting life and the way to obtain it, and indeed as God.

In Passing—Meaningful Asides in the Gospel of John

Looking at all these asides together suggests that the audience lives outside of the Holy Land, does not know Hebrew or Aramaic, and needs some help with Jewish customs. All of this comports with the tradition that the locale of the Johannine community was outside the Holy Land; it is thought to have been in Ephesus. Here would be where John the elder composed this Gospel out of the testimonies of the Beloved Disciple, and here is where John of Patmos also was involved with the church (see Rev. 2–3); quite possibly, these two persons are in fact the same person.

A Glimpse of Glory—Special Moments in the Gospel of John

In the final portion of this chapter, the author colors in the sketch of Jesus by examining the uniquely Johannine and more or less extended dialogues between Jesus and four individuals: Nicodemus, a Samaritan woman, Mary Magdalene, and Peter. From Jesus' exchange with Nicodemus comes an understanding that salvation arises not by acts of piety or physical birth (Judaism) but by spiritual birth

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through faith in Christ and his atoning sacrifice. From Jesus' dialogue with the Samaritan woman comes a reinforcement of the truth that salvation is inextricably linked not to sacred spaces or zones but to one's relationship to Jesus—a relationship that crosses both racial and gender barriers. From Jesus' brief exchange with Mary Magdalene we learn that discipleship and evangelism are not the exclusive privilege of Jewish males. And from Jesus' post-resurrection conversation with Peter we learn that God does not write off servants who sometimes falter and fail.

Synopsis of Contents

Even though the main plot of this Gospel follows the same general events as the Synoptic Gospels, the author of John takes freedom in telling the story his own way. Key features include Judean content, seven remarkable signs/miracles, the I Am sayings and an emphasis upon the sending of the Spirit.

Implications

The Gospel of John is not a testimony to Christological inflation, or the attempt to remake the historical Jesus in the image of God. The author of this Gospel was a monotheistic Jew, who was nonetheless prepared to call Jesus God. He claims to have had personal and firsthand evidence to support his conclusions. We should not doubt that he believed what he said about Jesus; and as an eyewitness of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, he was in a position to know the truth of the matter.

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Chapter 9:

Paul—Outlines of the Life and Letters of the Apostle

Chapter Summary

This chapter offers a panoramic view of Paul's life and ministry. The data we have on Paul come largely from two sources: the Book of Acts and Paul's own writings. Scholars have argued that the respective portraits of Paul drawn from each of these two sources differ significantly. But Acts depicts Paul almost exclusively in his evangelistic ministry to outsiders, whereas Paul's letters are reflecting his pastoral ministry exclusively to those who were already Christians. Paul did not send letters to the local Rotary clubs or Teamsters, so the resultant portraits of Paul will naturally differ.

This chapter's discussion begins with a chronology of Paul's life and ministry (evangelization and letter-writing follow) that is divided into four phases: (1) pre-Christian Saul; (2) conversion and hidden years; (3) endorsed missionary travels and efforts; and (4) later Pauline chronology. Next, the author treats what he calls the "Trinity of Paul's identity": Roman, Jew, and Christian. The third section discusses Paul, the multilingual, multicultural Apostle; the fourth section discusses rhetoric in the Greco-Roman world; the fifth section discusses Paul's rhetorical letters; the sixth section discusses Paul's narrative thought world; the seventh section discusses five stories that shook and shaped Paul's world and worldview.

A Pauline Chronology

PHASE ONE: Saul is born (A.D. 5–10) in Tarsus in Cilicia. His family moves (ca. A.D. 10) to Jerusalem and Saul begins his studies (A.D. 15–20) with Rabbi Gamaliel. After Jesus is crucified (A.D. 30 or 33), Saul persecutes the church. PHASE TWO: Saul is converted (A.D. 33 or 34) and then spends the next three years (A.D. 34–37) in Arabia before a brief and harrowing return to Damascus, after which he makes a 15-day visit (A.D. 37) to Jerusalem, where he meets only with Peter and Jesus' half-brother, James. For the next decade (A.D. 37–46) Saul preaches in Cilicia, experiencing great persecution and receiving another visionary experience and a "thorn in flesh" (2 Cor. 12.1–10). In A.D. 47 Barnabas brings Saul to Antioch, where he preaches for a year (Acts 11.25–26). He then makes a second visit to Jerusalem (the famine visit) with Barnabas and Titus (Acts 11.27–30/Gal. 2.1–14). PHASE THREE: Paul embarks (with Barnabas and Mark) on the first missionary journey (A.D. 48), which he completes

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