

NT 1.1.1 – Introduction to Gospels

New Testament Interpretation – Gospels

A. INTRODUCTION:

1. The “Argument of a book” is an assertion of the meaning or content of the book, and presumes a basic knowledge of the book as well as its relationship with redemptive history as revealed in Scripture. It involves understanding the MACRO outline and most importantly, how the author develops his purpose in writing.
 - a. It stands to reason that the author had some purpose to which the writing addresses. Careful reading may reveal clues about that purpose.
 - b. Hermeneutic interpretation is part art and part science, it is how we catch up with what the author meant to convey to his original hearers. This involves macro and micro evaluation of the structure and content of the text.
 - c. It is part of our desire to understand the author’s message that prompts this structural analysis.
 - d. Once the macro (big picture) shape of the meaning is sketched out and understood, then you can dial into the micro (details and word meanings) of the text. To start the micro without it understood in light of the macro is never wise... it distorts God’s message and may confuse understanding rather than promote it.
2. The purpose of hermeneutic interpretation is to interact with the biblical text, with the added context of extra biblical source info [Only after a personal interaction with the text]. Always begin your study by reading the bible, and ask the Spirit to open your mind and heart so you can hear God’s Word. You can only understand what God reveals, but you first need to do your work... your due diligence.
 - a. Read the text, drink it in and ponder it. When something catches your interest, look deeper at it.
 - b. Understand that your skills alone won’t lead to revelation [insight] or illumination [application].
 - c. Always approach the text expectant to hear from God.
 - d. Do not be dependent upon commentaries for your thinking. They are useful to keep you on the road toward understanding and out of the weeds, but will never replace your own insightful, Spirit dependent, critical thinking.
 - e. Become a critical thinker – of everything you read... ask questions of the author, hold them to a high level of scrutiny... don’t merely accept what is written as truth.
3. Don’t merely spiritualize – give “hard-headed contemplative thought.” Don’t merely fill your head with bible quotes, see how the whole message fits and works together.
 - a. Many people quote or use scripture as spiritual darts out of context, and devoid of meaning. The point is not to impress others, the point is to hear from God and allow Him to change you... to transform you.
 - b. Do your own thinking, and use resources to support or challenge your own thinking.

B. OVERVIEW OF NEW TESTAMENT:

1. God’s Redemptive Plan... was His only plan. He did not have a plan B, or a plan C... He only had plan A. From the Fall in Genesis 3 we see that Jesus was prophesied for the cross.

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- a. God wasn't surprised or dismayed by what happened... He is sovereign and knew all along what would transpire.
 - b. God allowed things to occur so as not to crush His creation, and especially humanity which is the greatest aspect of His creation because we are created in His Image.
2. New Testament is the follow up to Old Testament – Heb 1:12 – God has spoken in the OT to prepare and look for the superior revelation and release of His Spirit to humanity through His Son. The Word started in the Garden – the best place on earth, and ends in Heaven the best place in eternity.
- a. OT – God spoke through the prophets.
 - b. NT – God spoke through the Son.
 - i. The Son is the ultimate source of revelation – no greater message could be given.
 - ii. The OT spoke through emissaries or ambassadors [prophets], who revealed what they were shown in terms they could make understandable.
 - iii. The NT is direct communication with God – infinitely superior to the previous method.
 - c. OT leads off with prophecy of a Savior, and the problem of sin – Gen 1-3.
 - i. Gen 1-2: creation was perfect, the Fall of humanity corrupted creation, judgment resulted, but the promise for a redeemed future was provided – the seed of woman will crush the head of serpent... Jesus defeats Satan.
 - ii. Salvation is about redeeming creation, and the re-creation of all things.
 - iii. The “inner-man” is the new creation; the “outer-man” is the old corrupted creation that yearns for recreation.
 - d. OT – is the Old Covenant – the Law
 - i. Mosaic – Moses was the “proto-messiah” – he was the initial redeemer introducing the Mosaic/Sinaitic” covenant.
 - ii. Sinaitic – Mt Horeb is in response to the Abrahamic Covenant.
 - iii. Davidic Covenant – places a man as king on the throne in preparation of the Messiah from the line of David. David is king of Israel and Steward of Earth. Messiah is King of earth and king of Creation.
 - iv. Jeremiah 31
 - e. Old Covenant Law condemns Israel – Israel was the only recipient of the Law, and the Law applied only to Israel.
 - i. Obligation by Israel as being called out by and for God's purposes.
 - ii. Gentiles were excluded from the Law, but included in the blessing that would result by Israel's obedience.
 - iii. OC sets high standards but provides no supernatural power to accomplish them.
 - iv. OC proved that God is Holy, and man is not. Scripture repeatedly demonstrates the sinfulness of man and his dependence upon a Holy God.
 - v. OC proved man's need for a Savior, and provided the promise of Salvation.
 - vi. Saving Power is in the Person of the Savior – until He came, no salvation was possible, it remained an unfulfilled promise.

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- vii. Pentecost revealed that power is now available to solve man's problem... and the Cross works both ways; into the past as well as into the future. The Cross is the game changer.
- f. OT establishes our need for a savior and God's promise to provide
 - i. OT provided a silhouette of Messiah – not a clear picture.
 - ii. Promise was of a future time when the Truth of God would be revealed, and humanity and God enjoined in relational intimacy not possible with the OC.
 - iii. Israel had an advantage over the gentiles because the law foretold of Jesus through them; they were given information and should have recognized Messiah when He came.
- g. "The Law" – "Torah" is revealed in the Pentateuch – Genesis through Deuteronomy.
 - i. Sinai covenant – the Law – Word's from God.
 - ii. Scripture was written so that we may know who God is – it is God's self-disclosure to humanity. It is one long and wonderful love letter to humanity.
 - iii. Exodus was not written to disclose the covenant, they already knew it. It was written to preserve the knowledge knowing humanity is prone to forgetfulness and neglect. The Word keeps us alert and vigilant.
 - iv. From Joshua to the end of the OT – is the application of the Sinai covenant, which anticipates the New Covenant. It is written very bluntly, displaying the frailty and weakness of humanity, and our hopelessness without God.
 - v. The law was written to point to the Savior.
 - vi. The rest of the OT discusses how Israel utterly failed, and their absolute need for a Savior – promise of hope.
- 3. New Testament Message – it is a book of HOPE
 - a. It was written after the events occurred by people who knew the OT/OC, and both knew and experienced the NT/NC.
 - b. The vast majority of people were exposed to the NT through 'hearing' the good news – written copies were not available until the Guttenberg Bible. The news was preached by people who knew the Truth, and people received the message through the "ear gate".
 - i. Most of the initial Christians were Jews who observed the events and committed their life to their Messiah.
 - ii. Many Jewish leaders were familiar with writing and copying the OT Scripture. It wasn't long before they started to write down the events that occurred which were later organized into the New Testament as we know it.
 - iii. Because the means of story was the easiest ways of sharing truth, it is not unreasonable that about 1/3 of Scripture is story.
 - iv. Because poetry is a means to capture our imagination and emotions, it is not unreasonable that 1/3 of Scripture is poetry.
 - v. Inspired authors organized these stories and poetry with appropriate narrative to allow the Gospel message to endure.
 - vi. The Good News is the Gospel – the Messiah has come! God is here! Now and forevermore! We are free of the shackles of sin and death! We now have the gift of eternal life! Good news indeed!

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- c. OT hope is fulfilled when the Savior has come! Salvation is now available for everyone! This is great news = Gospel.
 - d. The NC is the Ultimate Covenant! This is WAY better than the old!
 - e. New hope is He's coming back for His own!
 - i. Great news for believers
 - ii. Really bad news for the others
 - f. NT is superior to OT – Hebrews 1
 - g. Savior [KING] came bringing salvation – Heb 2:2-3
 - h. Savior is coming back to complete the work of salvation – Heb 9:28
 - i. Redemption is as much about the second coming as the first. It is a two-part matter.
 - ii. 1st coming was to deal with the problem of sin... to take it away. Sin is completely dealt with, and is no longer an issue with God – He is satisfied with Jesus work on the cross.
 - iii. 2nd coming is to deal with flawed/corrupted creation – to make everything new.
 - iv. 2nd coming is not theological extravagance, but essential Truth!
 - v. We need to long for the later as much as appreciate the former – the Work is not done!
 - i. The OT spoke of “the angel of the Lord” who came and did miraculous things and revealed God’s purpose, etc. The angel was God’s representative – he was an angel, it was not Jesus. God did not come in the flesh until Jesus. Hence His name “Emanuel” = God with us.
4. NT scriptures – Generally are comprised of 4 groups of writings – 1) Gospels – Mathew, Mark, Luke, John; 2) Early Church establishment – Acts [history], Romans [theology]; 3) Church Maintenance – Church Epistles: written to specific churches, and Pastoral Epistles: written to establish effective Church leadership ; 4) Apocalypse – Revelation the New Testament apocalyptic book, which flows out of Daniel which is the Old Testament apocalyptic book.
- a. Gospels – words and work of the savior – the New Covenant is proclaimed. It is not just a history or depiction of the life of Jesus. Establishment of the New Covenant is the primary concern.
 - i. Sermon on the Mount is New Covenant truth expressed – not pre-NT.
 - ii. The Kingdom is pronounced, the differences shown.
 - b. Acts is an establishment of New Covenant message – it is no longer the temple or Israel, it's the Church – the New Israel or True Israel.
 - c. Romans is the theology of the New Covenant.
 - d. Epistles – teaching the churches about theology, corrected their problems, and explaining about life between Savior’s comings.
 - e. Revelation – teaching about second coming and restored life with God.

C. GOSPELS & NEW TESTAMENT

1. We need to understand these were written by churchmen to and for churchmen:

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- a. Written 30 +/- years after Jesus, as leaders realized Jesus return was not immanent, but would be delayed. They wanted to preserve the teachings of the apostles and church fathers before they died.
- b. It is known that many 1st century Jews [Scribes in particular] were trained to transmit written traditions with remarkable accuracy. The oral tradition of the ancients was well known as well. That the Bible was established in the oral and written traditions is in keeping with the Hebrew Culture as guardians of the Law of Moses and the Old Covenant. The notion that later prophets had to correct major errors in the message is false. Prophets instead made clear God's Word as previously revealed to each new generation.
- c. While the New Testament authors were evangelistic, their writings were not merely evangelistic; they were written to the primarily Jewish/Christian church as a basis of faith and proclamation of the Messiah.
- d. These writers were inspired by the Spirit to write as they did, but they were also well educated for the purpose and they employed scribes who were also well educated and trained to preserve these documents.
- e. Believing in Jesus as God and Messiah was presumed, but believing in a transformative and dynamic sense is what was being preached.
- f. OT was written by and for Israel.
- g. NT was written by and for the New Israel – the People of the New Covenant of all nations, tribes, and languages.
- h. Disciples were supernaturally empowered to recall and preach Jesus' words and message – John 14:25-26
- i. Preaching the Word of the Gospel [Good News] was not ostensibly to convert people – because only the Spirit can convict. But when God brings conviction – which when received in genuine remorse and repentance which leads to restoration; and then God brings reconciliation – only God can reconcile. Preaching was to plant seeds so that God could harvest through the Spirit. God initiated redemptive action and completes the action, but humanity has a role to play in accepting and applying what God offers.
- j. The Gospels depict significant events that have occurred in history – in real time and place, and with real people – to demonstrate that every person's destiny depends upon the death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah.

2. New Testament Background dates:

- a. Abraham – 2,000 BC
- b. Moses – 1,500 BC
- c. David – 1,000 BC
- d. Exile & return – 500 BC
 - i. Inter-testament period – from the final OT prophet Malachi about 450 BC to the birth of Jesus.
 - ii. The Period of the “prophets and prophetic writings’ was during and after the monarchy.
 - iii. God's Kingdom was conceived and revealed in terms of Monarchy – understood as individual sovereign rule of law.
- e. Israelite History

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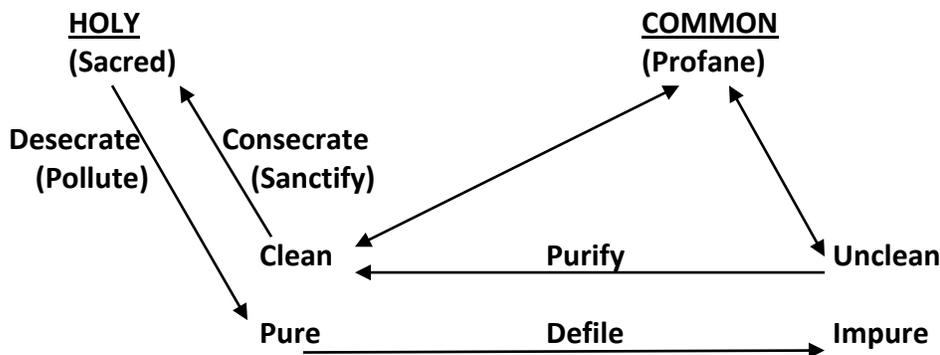
- i. Exodus – 1446 BC
- ii. Conquest of the land under Joshua – 1406-1375 BC
- iii. Period of the Judges – 1375-1050 BC
- iv. Saul - 1050-1010 BC
- v. David - 1010-971 BC
- vi. Solomon - 971-931 BC
- vii. Divided Kingdom [after Solomon] - 931-722 BC
- viii. Assyria over thru Samaria - 722 BC
- ix. Babylon suzerainty - 605-539 BC
- x. Temple destroyed – 586 BC
- xi. Mede-Persia – 539-331 BC
- xii. Greece - 331-175 BC
- xiii. Antiochus IV [Seleucid kings] 175 BC
- xiv. Maccabees - 164 BC
- xv. Rome [Herod] – 65 BC

3. Judaism at time of Jesus

- a. Four groups of Jewish leaders – Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots
 - i. Pharisees – focused on the bible and synagogue.
 - 1. Synagogue means ‘to gather’ or is ‘a gathering’
 - 2. Synagogues rose in prominence after the destruction of the Temple in 586 BC during the exile – where the people came together and recalled & studied God’s words; the Rabbi’s were the teacher/shepherds of the people... not unlike Christian pastors.
 - ii. Sadducees – focused on the Temple and the nation
 - 1. Origin of the Temple was the Tabernacle – which was ordained by God.
 - 2. Origin of Tabernacle is Sinai covenant
 - 3. Tabernacle and Temple was an earthly reflection of the Heavenly Court.
 - 4. Temple is about blood sacrifice – the cultis worship
 - a. 1st Temple built by Solomon
 - b. 2nd Temple Haggai & Zerubbabel
 - c. 3rd Temple Herod the Great
 - iii. Essenes – they were a part of very strict and zealous Jews who took part in the Maccabean revolt against the Syrians. Personal piety and oaths of obedience were expected. They separated themselves from the main society preferring to live lives in seclusion in prayer and study.
 - iv. Zealots – originated during the reign of Herod the Great [6 BC] and ceased to exist at Masada 73 AD. Zealots took their personal identity in terms of Israel national identity. They hated the Romans and Greeks, and wanted them destroyed with Israel ruling the land as promised.
- b. Text and Teaching that circulated in the first few Christian centuries before the New Testament was Canonized:
 - i. Old Testament – Torah, Pentateuch, writings – were well known, and much of it committed to memory. It was expected that each young man and woman

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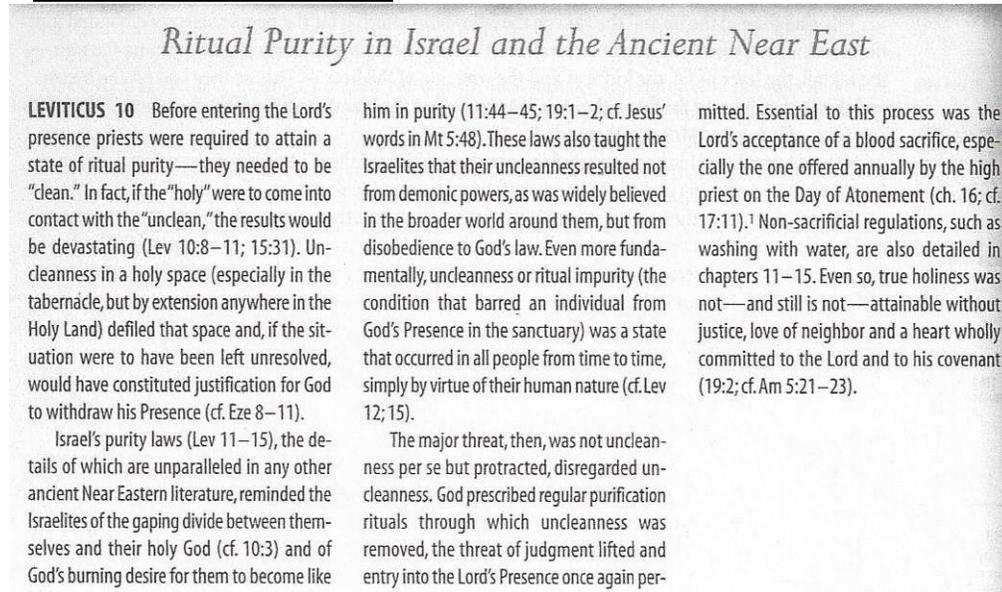
- would memorize the Torah before the age of 12... the age of accountability or entrance into the Jewish community as an adult.
- ii. Gospels and epistles were copied and circulated so home churches would have access for evangelism discipleship.
 - iii. Apocrypha – apocalyptic writings: these writings followed the initial NT era and have some good preaching, possibly even some words of the Lord, salted with various heresies. Gnosticism and other heresies put forward texts that claimed to be inspired but were counterfeits including false doctrine and “hidden truths” available only to the properly initiated.
 - iv. Pseudepigrapha – Messianic expectations writings, which included the development of Angelology. These were typically written by an unknown author who represented themselves as being a known disciple or leader to gain authority. It is Pseudo [false] truth.
- f. A Primary distinction between the Old and New Testaments has to do with differences between their views of the Spiritual and material worlds, and ritual purity in approaching a Holy God:
- i. Spiritual and material world distinctions – following is a pictorial representation of “The Segregated View of OT Theology” – This diagram is helpful in understanding the disconnect between the Pharisees and Jesus. The Pharisees were locked into an Old Covenant [Mosaic/Sinai Covenant] mindset where the material world was divided between the Holy [Sacred] and the Common [Profane]. Clean and unclean in terms of ritual purity must be seen through this lens. In this mindset, when something unclean came into contact with something that was clean, the clean became unclean and a purification process had to be undertaken to restore it. This clean/unclean dynamic never worked the other way around, except with Jesus... which changed everything.



1. This was the OT world view presented in Leviticus 10:10 that was prevalent in Jewish thought when Jesus came and taught.
2. Jesus had to correct His disciple’s errant thinking with a drastically different concept of what was clean and unclean – see Matthew 15:1-20.

3. Peter struggled with this even after Pentecost – this was the nature of the sheet descending with all manner of ‘unclean’ food on it – Acts 10:11-15.

ii. Ritual Purity as understood in the Old Testament – From Zondervan’s Archaeological Study Bible:



g. Language

- i. Hebrew – the Israelite language until the exile.**
- ii. Aramaic – through exile and return, and the common language throughout most of the mid-East.**
- iii. Greek – was originally the language of academics and of the government – Alexander the Great was a student of Aristotle and wanted to spread Aristotelian influence. He promoted a common form of Greek – considered vulgar for its common form – hence the name vulgate. Aramaic and Greek were the predominate languages.**
- iv. Latin – was the official language of the Roman Empire – it was the language of Roman government and of the aristocracy.**

h. Geography of Palestine:

- i. Judea – the southern portion of Israel including Jerusalem.**
- ii. Samaria – the middle portion of Israel.**
 - 1. Populated by the ‘half-breed’ Jews created by the exile.**
 - 2. Babylon sought to dilute the fiercely autonomous Israel by inter-racial marriages, and they were hated by the Jews who sought to keep their blood pure.**
- iii. Galilee – the northern portion of Israel.**
- iv. Gaza and the desert wilderness were sparsely populated and havens for refugees and thugs.**
- v. Judeans and Galileans were Jews and followed both synagogue and temple worship.**

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- vi. Samaritans blended Jewish and pagan beliefs. They had their own places of worship and were denied access to the Temple in Jerusalem.
- i. NT History – approximate:
 - i. 4 BC – Herod’s death – Herod was a vassal king loyal to Rome.
 - ii. 6 AD – Palestine was reduced to Roman province under the authority of a Roman Governor. The King of Israel was subservient to the Governor and held religious and taxation authority.
 - iii. 30-33 [or 26-30] – Jesus’ public life/ministry. He was probably born around 6BC.
 - iv. 48-49 – Paul’s 1st mission
 - v. 57-59 – Paul in Caesarea
 - vi. 60-62 – Paul in Rome – prison epistles – Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians
 - vii. 62-66 – Paul free
 - viii. 64 – Nero burns Rome & Christian persecution begins
 - ix. 66-68 – Paul & Peter executed in Rome
 - x. 70 – Destruction of Jerusalem & Temple
 - 1. Wrath of Rome started in 67 under Nero, and pursued under Vespasian
 - 2. Masada destroyed 73
 - xi. 81-96 – Domitian persecuted the church. It is estimated that somewhere around 1,500,000 Jews, Messianic Jews, and Christian Greeks were killed. The willingness of these early Christians to accept death rather than renounce Jesus dumfounded the world at the time, and swelled the ranks of the faithful as it was obvious that people would not die for a lie but would cling to the Truth inspite of the threat of death.
 - xii. 90-95 – John exiled to Patmos [probably by Domitian] & Revelation is written

D. SYNOPTIC PROBLEM – synoptic means ‘to be seen together’ or ‘seeing the same’ – it speaks of the similarity of the three gospels of Mathew, Mark & Luke. The problem is how to explain the similarity and the differences. Some known facts about the Gospels:

1. Matthew, Mark & Luke are very similar to each other, so much so that in many cases the same language and even the same material is used.
2. In contrast, the Gospel of John is extremely different, and John not only uses different language, but he adds different material.
3. Matthew [Levi] and John were eyewitnesses to the events – they were part of the disciples/apostles. John was the inner-favorite, one of the three at the Transfiguration of Jesus. It is properly reasoned that their accounts should be given more weighty authority as a consequence of their personal involvement in the story accounts revealed.
4. Mark is “John Mark” and was a close associate of Peter, who wrote his account of the Gospel message.
5. Luke was a close associate of Paul and a highly educated physician who also wrote The Acts of the Apostles. Luke’s 2 volume account is reasoned to be well researched and accurately reported. The theology revealed in their writings understandably reflects that of the apostle they are associated with.

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6. Feeding of the 4000 is the only miracle [other than resurrection] that is common to all 4 books.
7. Only 8-9% of John is included in the synoptics. Which is wonderful as it gives so much more content and depth that we wouldn't otherwise have.
8. In addition to the material in Mark that is parallel to Matthew and Luke, about 200 verses in Luke and Matthew are not found in Mark.
9. Mark has fewer than a dozen verses not found in Matthew or Luke.
10. The most reasonable solution for the similarity of the Synoptics is a common source document. Such a document is commonly identified as 'Q' may have been a combination of gospel material used by the authors. Though none of these source documents have survived, it is reasonable that some of Jesus' and the apostle's sayings were recorded and preserved during Jesus' and His Apostles ministry in the 1st century. The church fathers of the 1st and 2nd century were known to collect these writings and maintain and share copies as the church grew and expanded. The matter of identifying and canonizing [pronouncing writings as authoritative] began in the late 1st and early 2nd century AD. However, it was not until 367 AD that the Bible was adopted including the Gospels, Acts, General Epistles, Pauline Epistles, and Revelation. These documents had been in circulation for a long while, but this is the first known confirmation in the church logs that confirmed these books as authoritative.
11. Mark is considered the 1st of the gospels to have been written, with Mathew next and Luke last of the synoptics. Both Matthew and Luke most probably had access to and used Mark's gospel and perhaps the Q source as well, but arranged their material quite differently. John's gospel and writings were the last near the end of his life. He likely would have had copies of one of more of the other gospels, but God wanted a different message recorded that only John could have written.
12. Events developed in the Synoptics – the synoptics tell essentially the same stories but in different order and often with a subtle difference in purpose. All the Gospel messages are "evangelistic" they point to Jesus as Messiah and Savior, and all should believe Him.

PERICOPE – one developed thought:

<u>PERICOPE – one developed thought:</u>	<u>MATHEW:</u>	<u>MARK:</u>	<u>LUKE:</u>
Jesus & Beelzebub	12:22-27	3:30-30	11:14-28
The Sign of Jonah	12:38-45	n/a	11:29-32
Jesus' mother & brothers	12:46-50	3:31-35	8:19-21
Parable of the Sower	13:1-9	4:1-9	8:4-8
Reason for the Parables	13:10-17	4:10-12	8:9-10
Interpretation of the Sower Parable	13:18-23	4:13-20	8:11-15
Parable of the Weeds ¹	13:24-30	n/a	n/a
Lamp on the Stand	n/a	4:21-25	n/a
Parable of the seed growing secretly	n/a	4:26-29	n/a
Parable of the Mustard Seed	13:31-32	4:30-34	n/a
Parable of the Yeast	13:33	n/a	n/a
Jesus teaching in Parables	13:34-35	n/a	n/a
Interpretation of the Parable of Weeds ¹	13:36-43	n/a	n/a
Parable of the Hidden Treasure	13:44	n/a	n/a

¹ Weeds (or Tares) are a type of weed that looks like wheat when it is young, however it produces no fruit (grain).

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Parable of the Pearl	13:45-46	n/a	n/a
Parable of the Net	13:47-50	n/a	n/a
The Householder	13:51-52	n/a	n/a
The Calming of the Storm	8:18, 23-27	4:35-41	8:22-25
Healing of the Gerasene Demoniac	8:28-34	5:1-20	8:26-39
Raising of Jairus' Daughter/healing of woman	9:18-26	5:21-43	8:40-56
Rejection of Messiah at Nazareth	13:53-58	6:1-6a	4:16-30
Sending out the Disciples	10:1-15	6:6b-13	9:1-6
Beheading of John the Baptist	14:1-12	6:14-29	[9:7-9]
Feeding the 5,000	14:13-21	6:30-44	9:10-17
Walking on the Water	14:22-36	6:45-56	

E. GOSPEL AS GENRE

1. What are the Gospels? What are the defining traits/features?

- a. No books had ever been written quite like the Gospels, and no other type of writing has ever been given this designation.
- b. There are some unique features of the Gospels:
 - i. The Gospels present biographical accounts of Jesus, but unlike most other ancient biographies the Gospels are anonymous.
 - ii. They lack the literary pretensions characteristic of most biographies, presenting their objects as real people with warts and all. The only One who is consistently and always presented differently is Jesus.
 - iii. They combine teaching, action, and moral/ethical values in a preaching-oriented work that stands apart from anything else in the ancient world.
 - iv. The words and teachings of Jesus – parables, etc., are presented in a narrative format that tells a story within a greater story that emerges from the Old Testament story.
 - v. Works and miracles are presented to validate that Jesus is Who He claims to be... God in the flesh entering history to reveal God's Truth to suffering humanity and redeem them for eternity. In other ancient biographies the hero and foils are presented differently (IE. Homer, Josephus, etc.).
 - vi. The entire point of the Gospel message is to identify as Jesus as the Messiah/King – God in the flesh.
 - vii. The description of Jesus suffering, death and resurrection are presented to solicit a reasonable faith reaction.
 - viii. The Gospel is the Old Testament fulfillment of God's promises to Israel.
 - ix. Jesus being rejected by Jewish leaders is really Good News for everyone – the door is now open for all to enter God's Kingdom.
 - x. The unique message of the Gospel is its appeal to the gentiles... the people previously spurned by the Jews are now brothers and sisters of equal stature. There is no longer inequality of humanity... all are set free, all are welcome.

2. Description of a Gospel

- a. The gospels mean to show Jesus as the OT promised King/Messiah. Jesus fulfilled in His life and ministry hundreds of specific prophecies, including the 5 "Suffering Servant

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Songs” of Isaiah. The Gospel message is that Messiah has come and mediated a New Covenant that is vastly superior to the Old Mosaic/Sinai Covenant. The separation of humanity and God has now been ended – the tearing of the veil in the Holy of Holies at Jesus’ death validates God’s New Covenant secured by Jesus’ death; while the Pentecost coming of the Spirit as promised by Jesus and foretold by Joel 2:28 validates Jesus resurrection.

- b. As the OT Messiah and fulfillment of OT, He personified the dawning of the Messianic age – where humanity and God may live together in peace... now on earth and forever in eternity.
 - c. The logical result of this recognition is the transference of loyalty from the Old Covenant of the Moses/Law to the New Covenant of Jesus/Grace.
 - d. The miracles, Parables, and discourses defined the identity, work, and program of Messiah – especially of His 2 part coming – 1st to deal with sin [death and resurrection], 2nd to deal with corrupted creation [the 2nd coming or Parousia] at the end of the age when all things are made new and whole.
 - e. The problem the gospel writers were dealing with is – if the Messiah has come and given redemption as a right to His followers, why haven’t things gotten better? Creation is still a mess, and Messianic rule is not happening. The answer is that we were given the best part first – the ‘inner-man’ is changed even though the ‘outer-man’ remains corrupted. With a renewed inner-man, we work for the implementation of the great commission, and look forward to the 2nd coming and the recreation.
 - f. Though Jesus was Messiah sent to Israel, Israel rejected Him, thus opening the door for the Gentile’s direct approach to Him – as foretold by OT scripture.
3. Occasion for the Gospels:
- a. The Gospels are church documents – written by churchmen for churchmen to allow for the authoritative and conformed nature of teaching, preaching, and ministry.
 - b. They were written between 30 and 60 years of the actual events – and included 2 eyewitnesses as authors.
 - c. These written accounts complimented what was being taught orally by the church.
 - d. The early believers held that Jesus’ return in His 2nd Advent [Coming] would be soon. Thus the writings they kept were for immediate use in ministry. It was not until the Apostles began to be martyred and Jesus’ return was seen to be delayed indefinitely that they began to more diligently collect, collaborate, corroborate, and copy these documents to preserve them for posterity. Validating these documents was an intensely debated, vigorously completed and thorough analysis of the materials.
 - e. These documents are the same things that Jesus taught – and form a direct line of access for modern disciples to have a direct link with the past.
4. Jesus – God entering History:
- a. Until the Renaissance, the Gospels were consistently regarded as historically reliable accounts. The main problem to be faced by the serious student/scholar was how to harmonize the 4 Gospels in terms of content, theology, and purpose.
 - b. With the Enlightenment, all ancient texts were regarded with suspicion and as parochial.

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- c. **Modern study has demonstrated that the Biblical accounts are much more consistent through time, and trace the trajectory of redemptive history more objectively. It is unfortunate that the science/Scripture battle had to be fought for so long between strident literalists. Modern scholars see little argument between science and Scripture, as scientific discoveries often support Scripture.**
- d. **The point of the miracles and resurrection account is to demonstrate that the King of Creation has come and laid His claim to redeem humanity. It is a message of a reasonable faith.**
- e. **The Gospels demonstrate a high degree of consistency and coherence of the general course of Jesus life and ministry. The divergences are more a response to the different perspective and purpose of the writer, as well as the differences to who he was writing.**
- f. **A full harmony of the historical facts was never the intent of the authors, nor is it a reasonable necessity. Most of the differences are not a matter of chronological error, but rather chronological indifference as it was never the author's intention to solve this problem. It was their intention to make their case as to the Person, Nature, and Message of the Messiah – and to invite humanity into the New Covenant community of faith.**