

Topic

● I INTRODUCTION

- A There is a way to put any study of the Gospels and/or of the NT into a proper time perspective
- B You can do this by applying some statistics to your own life (pretending you lived at the time of Jesus)
 - 1 Jesus was born roughly 4 years before you were born; (you were born in 0 AD)
 - 2 He ministered, suffered, died, and rose roughly around your 30th birthday
 - 3 Paul probably wrote the first written document of the NT, his First Letter to the Thessalonians, roughly around your 50th birthday
 - a Before your 50th birthday, you already had belonged to the Church for 20 years
 - b Throughout this period, you had no written Christian document
 - c Jesus had been preached and shared vocally
 - 4 The Gospels began to appear much later in your life
 - a Mark probably wrote the first inspired written Gospel around your 70th birthday
 - b Matthew and Luke wrote around your 85th birthday
 - c And, finally, John produced his Gospel around your 95th birthday
 - 5 Here are some conclusions
 - a For 40 years you were Christian without any written Gospel
 - b For 55 years your Church life celebrated Jesus with just Mark to enrich your faith
 - c For 65 years your Church had done this without John's exalted portrait of Jesus
- C We should be able to draw certain important conclusions from the material contained in these dates
 - 1 The Church was not produced by the Bible, the Gospels; on the contrary, it is the Church that produced the Gospels
 - 2 The Church was born, existed, and grew for nearly 40 years before any of our written Gospels existed
 - a And yet the Church preached the "Gospel" throughout this generation
 - (1) Acts 8:25
 - (a) When they had testified and proclaimed the word of the Lord, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages.
 - (2) Galatians 1:8
 - (a) But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!
 - (3) Galatians 1:11
 - (a) I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up.
 - b Therefore, we reach some conclusions regarding the term "Gospel"
 - (1) It does not refer to a written booklet
 - (2) Rather it is the living Lord Jesus, the proclamation (joyful announcing) of this Living Lord Jesus
 - 3 Throughout the formative years of the Church, individuals produced booklets, "Gospels," that were not accepted by the Church
 - a Consequently, individual interpretation of the Bible is not always an adequate introduction to the Bible
 - b Some individuals misinterpreted their experiences of Jesus; experiences they felt prompted to share in written form
 - c The only adequate standard for interpreting the Bible, including the Four Gospels it contains, and for guiding our individual interpretations is the Living Faith of the Church, the Church Tradition
- II "HE LIVES!"
 - A After Pentecost, the Church began and continued to exist because of a shared experience of the reality of Jesus alive, Jesus living; this experience was the basis of Church life
 - 1 We need to remember this fact today as we consider the early Church
 - a Our experience often is so different
 - b We want Jesus to exist -- for all of Christianity to be real, true
 - c They knew Jesus existed-- that Christianity was real, true
 - 2 They experienced Jesus acting in them
 - a Changing them

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- b Saving them
- c Making them a community
- 3 And they wanted, needed
 - a To share their excitement with others
 - b To allow others to live their joy
 - c To proclaim to the world, "He lives!"
- 4 Because "He lives they could face" – and so can we
 - a Not "tomorrow" -- as the Bill Gaither hymn says
 - b But "today!"
 - c And every "today"
- B This continuing experience of Jesus explains what seems to us like a peculiarity of the NT
 - 1 Nowhere does it try to prove the resurrection
 - 2 The reason for this seems strange (to us)
 - a But the reason for the omission is that the resurrection was the starting point for the Church, not a goal
 - b Their experience of Jesus Risen was where their faith began
 - c It was not a conclusion to which any NT document was intended to lead
 - 3 The NT was written for the Church -- this is the single most important point to remember when hearing (or reading) it
 - a It was intended for a faith community sharing a common experience of a new force, the Spirit of Jesus, affecting and improving people's lives in a radical way
 - b It was not intended as a convert book for missionaries to use in arguing with others
 - (1) Luke has a few sections that might have been added as answers the missionaries could use
 - (2) But presenting these points was not the main thrust of Luke
 - (3) Rather these points are icing on the cake – extras Luke includes with His Good News
 - c The booklets are not response books to be used against opponents – they are not "apologetic" works
 - d Rather, they are faith books intended to deepen and enrich the religious experiences of believers
- C The first Christians wanted others to share this excitement, so that these newcomers would enrich, add to, their experiences of Jesus
 - 1 The Gospels are booklets of joy
 - a Of all words in the Greek language the Christians selected the Greek word for "Good News" to describe their experience
 - (1) Each generation of Christians should check to see if this were the term they would use to describe their experience of religion
 - (2) This test can be a standard they can to use to see if their faith is still true to the faith of the Church
 - b Our English word "Gospel" derives from two Anglo-Saxon terms
 - (1) "Goode Spiel"
 - (2) "The Good News" in today's English
 - 2 For Christians, the Good News was not (and is not) a message, but a Person, Jesus Christ the Lord!
 - a Jesus was alive and He was with them, He was within them, -- that was the "Gospel," He was the "Gospel"
 - (1) We understand each Gospel as a collection of stories in a booklet that offer us information about the life of Jesus
 - (2) The early Christians understood each of them as an experience, an experience of Jesus to be experienced and added to their own, enriching it
 - b Alive in His Spirit, these Christians naturally "gospelled," naturally radiated to others the joy they knew
 - 3 There is only one Gospel -- Jesus!
 - a Each Christian experienced Him
 - (1) But each Christian experienced Him differently -- because they were each different
 - (2) Many attempted to share these experiences with others -- often in writing
 - b But only four of the experiences that were written as "Lives of Jesus" were special

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- (1) All Christians gospelled Jesus by their lives, their words, and, sometimes, by their writings
- (2) But only four of these gossellers were guaranteed by God, and, eventually, by the Church, to be accurate for those experiencing them and for us today
 - (a) Jesus is accurately experienced
 - (b) And this experience of Jesus is accurately shared
 - (c) Both are necessary
 - [1] The sharing could have been of someone other than Jesus
 - [2] The sharing could have been based on a real experience of Jesus but might have been shared inaccurately, again creating a false image of Jesus
- c Therefore we must remember that
 - (1) We should not refer to "St. Mark's Gospel"
 - (2) Rather we should refer to "The Gospel according to Mark" – as experienced by Mark -- Jesus and His Spirit as experienced by Mark
- D WHAT PROBABLY HAPPENED
 - 1 If we read between the lines of the New Testament, we can discover the historical Jesus; Jesus before His image was enhanced by post-Resurrection faith in Him
 - a When He began to minister publicly, the historical Jesus
 - (1) Preached
 - (2) Healed
 - (3) Taught
 - (4) Gathered followers including a special group called "The Twelve"
 - (5) Was arrested
 - (6) And was crucified
 - b When Jesus was arrested
 - (1) His disciples, discouraged, abandoned Him
 - (2) All the disciples, according to Mark, abandoned Jesus from the moment of His arrest at Gethsemane
 - (3) After Jesus was arrested,
 - (a) These disciples returned to Galilee from Judea
 - (b) They went back to their old way of living: fishing
 - (c) This assumption explains a strange detail in the Resurrection stories
 - [1] In John, after a reported Easter experience of the resurrected Jesus, we learn the disciples have returned to Galilee
 - {a} Jesus appears to His disciples and gives them His mission and power and Spirit
 - {1} John 20:19
 - {a} When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."
 - {b} ... 21 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."
 - {2} He makes these disciples crucial for the salvation of their world
 - {b} After receiving this sacred mission, they go back to Galilee in order to go fishing!
 - {1} John 21:1
 - {a} After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias... 3 Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.
 - [2] The return of the discouraged disciples to Galilee explains the Resurrection promise in Matthew and Mark
 - {a} Matthew 28:5*
 - {1} But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. 6* "He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.
 - {2} 7* "And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you."

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- [b] Galilee is the historical local where the disciples actually had their first post-Easter experiences of Jesus
- [c] As a result of these experiences of the Risen Lord, the scattered disciples were united back together as a group, as the Church, the New Israel, the New People of God
- 2 The disciples definitely had some dramatic experience of the Risen Jesus
 - a Some even doubted His appearance, their experience
 - (1) After all, such an appearance was unbelievable -- no one had ever resurrected
 - (2) All four Gospels reflect some Easter disbelief
 - (a) They think Jesus is a ghost, a vision
 - [1] Luke 24: 36
 - [a] While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."
 - [b] 37 They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. 38 He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?"
 - (b) Or they doubt what they are experiencing -- Matthew
 - [1] Matthew 28:16
 - [a] Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came
 - b Jesus gathered them back together as a community
 - c He did this by sharing His Spirit, His own life force, with them
 - (1) When? When did they receive the Spirit?
 - (2) There are differing traditions shared in the NT
 - (a) Luke in his second work, Acts, says the event occurred 50 days after Easter (called "Pentecost" because of the Greek word for a Jewish feast bring celebrated at this time)
 - [1] Acts 2:1
 - [a] When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.
 - [b] 3 Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.
 - (b) But John in his Gospel has the outpouring of the Spirit occur on Easter
 - [1] John 20:22
 - [a] When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."
 - (3) "When" individual disciples experienced Jesus and received His Spirit is not important -- each writer had theological reasons for selecting the dating offered us
 - (4) "That" they experienced Him is important
- III JESUS IS THE GOSPEL
 - A The first Christians, household slaves or peasants for the most part, were very practical people
 - 1 They were not interested in history but in reality
 - 2 They were interested in what Jesus was doing for them now, not in what He had done earlier
 - a He was touching their hearts and spirits -- in the now, not in some yesterday
 - b He was filling their minds with peace -- in the now, not in some yesterday
 - c He was changing their lives -- in the now, not in some yesterday
 - 3 In their excitement over the peace they were experiencing, they "preached" Him -- shared their joy with others
 - B And yet there were problems
 - 1 Jesus was not physically present any longer
 - a He had conquered death
 - b He had conquered all forces of evil
 - 2 And yet evil still affected them despite the reality of His Spirit being present in their lives

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- a Evil affected them from without
 - (1) They faced opposition in their preaching
 - (2) They suffered persecution from family, fellow Jews, and Roman authorities
- b Evil affected them from within
 - (1) They still experienced anger
 - (2) They also knew fear
 - (3) They seemed to know most of the same temptations they had known before Easter
- 3 Therefore, Jesus must be postponing His promised return when He would conquer all evil and complete the Kingship
- 4 But His return will occur soon!
- C To understand the NT, we must remember these facts
 - 1 We would expect the disciples immediately to start writing their memoirs and biographies of Jesus
 - a We would expect many, many such books
 - b We certainly would expect Gospels to be written before any other NT literature was produced
 - 2 Then we would expect many, many additional documents analyzing the meaning of the experiences of the Spirit of Jesus
 - 3 Actually the opposite was true
 - a Very few documents were written -- our first inspired work wasn't penned until 20 years after Easter
 - b And among these few documents, the gospels were not the first -- they came almost 50 years after Easter!
 - c Each of the gospels were written after all the letters of Paul had been sent and received
 - (1) The first written gospel, Mark's, is usually dated just before or after 70 AD
 - (2) And St Paul died around 65 AD during Nero's persecution
 - 4 If we remember what the Early Church believed, we should see that there is a problem
 - a But it's not why so little was written, and written so late
 - b But why anything was written
 - (1) If Jesus is returning soon -- and He is -- why write?
 - (2) It's a senseless waste of precious missionary time
 - (3) Who would read this literature anyway once Jesus returns and time ends as we know it?
 - 5 Consequently the preaching of Jesus by the Church was done orally for a generation
- D The NT writings were almost all "problem literatures" -- responses to problems needing immediate attention
 - 1 Almost all of Paul's letters respond to problem(s) in the Churches
 - 2 The fact that Christians wrote only in response to problems explains why the Gospels were not the first written parts of the NT
 - a Most of the other documents were also responses to problems
 - b Here's a brief history of the early Church and of the written Scriptures
 - (1) About 50 AD Paul began writing letters
 - (a) Naturally, they were responses to problems
 - (b) Romans, however, was not a "problem" letter; Paul wrote it to prepare for a trip he hoped to make to a Church that he had not established or visited before
 - (c) Paul sent answers in the other letters to problems or to serious questions the congregation had sent to him
 - [1] 1 Thessalonians
 - {a} The first Christians had died -- and the Church had no belief with which to handle these deaths
 - {b} When Jesus returns, they knew that He could keep those who were still alive from ever dying
 - {c} But could He bring the dead with decomposed bodies back to life?
 - {d} 1 Thessalonians 4:13
 - {1} But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

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- {2} 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.
 - {3} 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.
 - {4} 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.
- [2] 2 Thessalonians -- if, indeed, it is Pauline
 - {a} Some early Christians were not working
 - {b} Their position seemed reasonable: since Jesus is returning tomorrow, why should we work today?
 - {c} Paul's answer was simple: no work, no eat
 - {1} 2 Thessalonians 3:10
 - {a} For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. 11 For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies.
- [3] Galatians
 - {a} The Jewish law, including circumcision, was being forced on Greek converts who were already baptized and part of the Church
 - {1} Paul says Jesus is either
 - {a} Grace (no law needed)
 - {b} Or reward, merit, (must follow the Law)
 - {2} And Paul asserts He is grace
 - {3} Galatians 1:6
 - {a} I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7 which is not another, but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.
 - {b} 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.
 - {b} Those pushing the Law wanted to pervert the Gospel by setting prerequisites (especially circumcision) to people receiving the love of Jesus
 - {c} Paul knew that Jesus is gift (grace) not reward (merited)
- [4] 1 Corinthians
 - {a} This letter answers a list of questions
 - {1} What should the Church do about its disorderly, almost chaotic, worship?
 - {2} Was the Church correct when it continued to accept a member committing immorality (incest with a step-mother)?
 - {3} What about those who were still denying that the dead resurrect?
 - {4} And what was Paul's reaction to cliques forming within the Church?
 - {b} Just about each of these problems threatened the unity of the Church; therefore, Paul responded to each (except resurrection) from the central position that unity must have in a Christian community
- (2) The Gospels were written starting around 70 AD
 - (a) One event was influential in creating a variety of problems that eventually and separately produced Mark, Matthew, and Luke: the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple
 - [1] Mark:
 - {a} The problem was:
 - {1} Why did God allow this destruction to occur?
 - {2} Is this calamity the start of the "End of the Age?"
 - {b} Mark's short answer: No!
 - {c} Mark's longer answer: the Temple building had been cursed by Jesus 40 years earlier
 - {1} When He entered Jerusalem, Jesus cursed the Temple; He did not "cleanse" it
 - {2} Mark uses two stories involving the same fig tree that surround the scene at the Temple in order to show that Jesus cursed the Temple as He had the fig tree

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- {a} On Monday:
 - ((1)) Jesus as He was traveling towards Jerusalem, cursed a fig tree -- despite the curse, the tree seemed outwardly alive and unaffected
 - ((a)) **Mark 11:12**
 - [[1]] The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry.
 - [[2]] 13 Seeing in the distance a fig-tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs.
 - [[3]] 14 Then he said to the tree, "May no-one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard him say it.
 - ((2)) Jesus then entered into Jerusalem and cursed the Temple (30 CE) -- like the fig tree after the curse, the Temple still looked alive for the next 40 years (until it was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE)
 - ((a)) **Mark 11:15**
 - [[1]] On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there.
 - [[2]] He overturned the tables of the money-changers and the benches of those selling doves.
 - [[3]] 16 and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts.
 - ((b)) **Each action affected a vital area of Temple life**
 - [[1]] **Driving out those selling animals, Jesus made Temple sacrifice all but impossible**
 - [[a]] Only "spotless," perfect, animals were accepted for sacrifice
 - [[b]] The sellers provided these to people
 - [[c]] Without such animals, no sacrifice could be offered
 - [[2]] **Overturning the tables of those changing money, Jesus made financial support of the Temple difficult, if not impossible**
 - [[a]] Each adult Jewish male was required to pay an annual tax that went to the financial support of the Temple and its priests.
 - [[b]] Only one coin of the time could be used to pay the tax because it alone bore no pagan image
 - [[c]] People would swap their coins with the money changers in order to obtain the coinage approved for the Temple tax
 - [[d]] After Jesus chased the money traders out, Jews could no longer obtain the coins needed for the tax
 - [[e]] Without such coins, the Temple would wither for lack of financial support
 - [[3]] **And by ordering people not to carry anything in the Temple, Jesus made any Temple worship impossible**
 - ((c)) **Jesus, therefore, did not "cleanse" the Temple, He killed it; in effect, He "cursed" it**
- {b} On Tuesday
 - ((1)) **Mark 11:20**
 - ((a)) In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig-tree withered from the roots. 21 Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig-tree you cursed has withered!"
 - ((2)) Jesus travelled to Jerusalem again -- on the way there, the disciples noted the dead fig tree
 - ((3)) Mark included this second scene to drive home his point regarding the Temple
- {d} **The Temple was dead from the moment Jesus cursed it**
 - {1} The Temple was as dead as the fig tree was
 - {2} They were dead although both appeared to be alive for a period of time after they had been cursed
- {e} **Therefore, when they destroyed the Temple, the Romans were simply cutting down a dead tree**
- [2] **Matthew:**
 - {a} His Gospel was written to respond to a chain of events set in motion by the destruction of the Temple

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- {1} **This destruction was a serious trauma that affected the Jews and their religion**
 - {a} **Before the Temple was destroyed, the Jewish religion tolerated a wide variety of groups, of sects**
 - ((1)) Pharisees – laymen, they did more than the Law asked and believed in the traditions of the elders
 - ((2)) Sadducees -- the leading priests, they accepted only truths found in the Torah
 - ((3)) Essenes – they abandoned society and the Temple to live in monastic communities
 - ((4)) Zealots -- they despised pagan Roman rule and agitated for armed rebellion, certain that God would support them
 - ((5)) Herodeans – they cooperated with Herod and the Roman rulers
 - ((6)) Scribes (not a separate sect, but they were an identifiable group) -- they were experts, in the “writings” – the Bible
 - {b} **The unity of their religion focused upon the Temple and the animal sacrifice offered there**
 - {c} **When the Temple was destroyed, the Jews lost this focus of their faith**
 - ((1)) **The Jews, thus, needed to define who they were – and who they were not!**
 - ((a)) They decided to identify themselves by a strict observance of all the OT laws
 - ((b)) This observance included both circumcision and the kosher laws dealing with “clean” and “unclean”
 - ((2)) Matthew’s Church, basically Jewish in background, allowed a scattering of Greeks to join
 - ((3)) These Greeks accepted Jesus without accepting and following many of the laws of the OT
 - ((a)) They were not circumcised
 - ((b)) And they did not follow the kosher laws, the laws of “clean” and “unclean”
 - {d} **The Jewish leaders reached decisions that expelled Christian Jews from synagogue services**
 - {e} **And they began cursing them daily in prayers, in “a list of “Blessings” used to start each day**
 - {f} **Matthew’s Church wondered why God allowed this rejection to happen to them**
 - ((1)) Prior to this expulsion, the Jewish Christians had continued to attend the Temple and synagogue services
 - ((2)) Now they were excommunicated from the synagogues – and cursed!
- {2} **Of course, the destruction was a blow to all Christians -- but it must have posed the most serious challenge to those Christians who had a solid and active Jewish underpinning to their new faith**
 - {a} **Before their conversion they worshipped in the Temple**
 - {b} **And after their conversion they continue to worship in the Temple**
 - ((1)) Acts 2:42
 - ((a)) They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.
 - ((b)) 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.
 - ((c)) 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts.
 - ((d)) They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.
- {3} **Both groups, Jews and Jewish Christians, needed to know how God could allow such a devastation to occur to His house, the Temple**
- {b} **Matthew’s answer: the Church is the New and True Israel**
 - {1} **In this Gospel, Jesus is presented as**
 - {a} **The new and perfect Israel**
 - {b} **The new and perfect Moses**
 - {2} **The Church continues to live His Spirit, to be His presence in the world**

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- {3} The Church is being persecuted as was Jesus -- by the same Jewish leaders
- {4} Christians must live as members of a new family
 - {a} The true family of Jesus was based
 - ((1)) Not on blood as were Jewish families
 - ((2)) But on the will of God:
 - ((a)) Believing in Jesus
 - ((b)) Believing in His Love, His Spirit, His Blood
 - ((3)) Matthew 12:48
 - ((a)) But He answered and said to the one who told Him, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" 49 And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers!"
 - ((b)) 50 "For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother."
 - {b} Doing God's will consists in accepting Jesus and His salvation
 - {c} Kinship in the new People of God had a different foundation
 - ((1)) It was not based on something automatic -- physical blood
 - ((2)) Rather, it was based upon an act of faith -- accepting Jesus
- {c} When the old Israel rejected and killed its Christ, it ceased to be God's People
 - {1} Matthew 27:21
 - {a} "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" asked the governor. "Barabbas," they answered. 22 "What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?" Pilate asked. They all answered, "Crucify him!"
 - {b} 23 "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"
 - {c} 24 When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!" 25 All the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children."
 - {2} The leaders speak for the people and shout: "Let his blood be on us and on our children!"
 - {a} Israel continued to claim an automatic ("blood,") relationship to God
 - {b} But Jesus established a new relationship, one which the people, through their leaders rejected
 - {c} This has important consequences
 - ((1)) Israel was no longer the People of God -- Jesus was, the Church was
 - ((2)) Jerusalem was no longer the City of God -- the Church was
 - ((3)) The Temple was no longer the house of God -- Jesus was where God now dwelt
- [3] Luke:
 - {a} He wrote two books organized by a geographic theme
 - {b} Jerusalem, the place where God dwelt and revealed Himself, is the seam that joins these two books
 - {1} Luke shows that Jerusalem is no longer a geographical place
 - {2} "Jerusalem" is where the Spirit of God dwells after Easter
 - {a} In the Church
 - {b} Not in a building
 - {c} But in a people filled with the Spirit of Jesus
 - {c} Luke uses the Holy Spirit to unite the booklets, showing how both Jesus and the Church exercise exactly the same three missions once they are filled with the Spirit
 - {1} In the Gospel
 - {a} Jesus received the Spirit while He continues praying after having been baptized
 - {b} Filled with the Spirit, He preaches, heals, teaches
 - {c} Luke 3:21

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- ((1)) When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."
- {2} In Acts
 - {a} The Church continues praying after the Ascension of Jesus
 - {b} The Church received the Spirit while the group continues **praying**.
 - {c} Filled with the Spirit, the Church preaches, heals, teaches
 - {d} Acts 2:1
 - ((1)) When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.
 - ((2)) 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.
 - ((3)) 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.
 - {d} The Romans, then destroyed the old Jerusalem and Temple, the city, the building
 - {e} The new Jerusalem and Temple continued to thrive, the Church
- (b) The Gospel of John was written to respond to an entirely different problem
 - [1] Most scholars agree John was the last of our four inspired Gospel to be written
 - [2] John's community was blessed to include someone who had actually walked with Jesus
 - {a} He appears only in the Passion, at the Last Supper
 - {b} But from then on, He is presented as the
 - {1} The favorite of Jesus
 - {a} John 13:23
 - ((1)) One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him.
 - ((2)) 24 Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask him which one he means."
 - ((3)) 25 Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?"
 - ((4)) 26 Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon
 - {2} The best disciple, the only disciple to remain loyal to Jesus at the cross
 - {a} John 19:25
 - ((1)) Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.
 - ((2)) 26 When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing near by, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," 27 and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.
 - {3} The first disciple to believe in the Resurrection
 - {a} John 20:1
 - ((1)) Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.
 - ((2)) 2 So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"
 - ((3)) 3 So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. 4 Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.
 - ((4)) 5 He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in.
 - ((5)) 6 Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, 7 as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen.
 - ((6)) 8 Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed.
 - [3] This last living witness to the historical Jesus in the community of John died

Topic

- [a] He had helped this local church
 - {1} He would remember actions and words of Jesus that applied to problems the Church or individuals in it were facing
 - {2} And he would apply the Spirit of Jesus as he knew Him to new circumstances
- [b] What would this church do now?
- [c] At the Last Supper Jesus, according to this Gospel, provides the answer
 - {1} Jesus sends the Church the Holy Spirit, our Paraclete
 - {2} The Paraclete will teach us everything
 - {3} John 14:15
 - {a} "If you love Me, keep My commandments.
 - {b} 16 "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever-- 17 "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.
 - {4} John 14:25
 - {a} These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. 26 "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.
 - {5} John 15:26
 - {a} "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. 27 "And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.
 - {6} John 16:7
 - {a} "Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.
 - {b} 8 "And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.
- IV PREACHING, "KERYGMA"
 - A Through all these years, the Church continued preaching the Good News without any written Gospel
 - B This preaching had a core message
 - 1 The Age of Fulfillment is here, a claim that refers back to the OT
 - a Mark 1:14
 - (1) Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."
 - 2 God's rule in our lives and our world has arrived in the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus
 - a By raising Jesus from the dead, the Father exalted Him as the Messiah of the New Israel
 - b The Holy Spirit in the Church is the sign of Jesus' power now as the Christ
 - c To complete what He has begun Jesus will return soon
 - d So please have a "metanoia" -- a change in the way you have been living
 - C Acceptance of the preaching leads people to experience "healing"
 - 1 Physically
 - 2 Emotionally
 - 3 Intellectually
 - 4 Socially
 - 5 Spiritually
 - D Once healing begins, people desire deeper knowledge of Jesus
 - 1 Then the need for "teaching" arises naturally and spontaneously
 - 2 We want to protect the healing we experience from the chaos of life
 - 3 And we want to deepen this experience
- V THE CHURCH REMEMBERS

Topic

- A Remembering the deeds and words of Jesus was done by a faith community -- a community that believed "Jesus Christ was Lord"
 - 1 This community already had experienced Jesus, the Risen Jesus
 - 2 We must never forget that the memories of these individuals and communities had to have been colored by their faith experiences of the Risen Jesus
 - a They preserved those memories that helped them understand Jesus whose Spirit they were experiencing
 - b They preserved those memories that reflected their new experience of Jesus
 - c They preserved those memories that help them resolve the new obstacles they were facing in their life as an Easter community
 - d They preserved those memories which sharpened or helped their faith experience
 - (1) They remembered and passed on to others those actions of Jesus that offered them new insights into His Lordship
 - (2) They remembered and passed on to others those words of Jesus that offered new insights into their response to Jesus as Lord and Christ
 - (3) John 21:24*
 - (a) *This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true.*
 - (b) *25* But there are also many other things that Jesus did: if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.*
- B Their only interest was in understanding Jesus as He was presently ministering to them
 - 1 These first Christians had no time for academic curiosity
 - a The time was too short before Jesus returned
 - b Life was too harsh and severe and demanding for these poor people and these household slaves
 - 2 So stories from the past were remembered because they helped them understand the present
 - 3 Early stories and details about the life of Jesus before He began ministering were not helpful
 - a Birth stories, childhood stories, memories of hidden adult life (from around 13 to 30) were not remembered; the first written Gospel, Mark, included no childhood story!
 - b Their recollecting began with the start of Jesus' public ministry
 - (1) As the Jesus of history ministered to others then
 - (2) So the Living Jesus must be ministering to them now
 - 4 They were interested only in the saving activity of Jesus and the response they should give to Him
- C In their retelling, these stories gradually tended to lose all unimportant details
 - 1 These details were meaningful only to eyewitnesses
 - 2 Second and third-hand tellers would drop these nonessentials
 - a Dropping the unimportant facts, helped them focus on the point they wished to make by retelling this story
 - b Mark names the sons of Simon of Cyrene
 - (1) His community probably knew Alexander and Rufus
 - (2) Mark 15:21
 - (a) A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.
 - c Matthew doesn't include these names
 - (1) His community probably had no idea who Alexander and Rufus were
 - (2) So Matthew saw no reason to include their names
 - (3) Matthew 27:32
 - (a) As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross.
 - 3 Eventually, in the retelling, the stories were smoothed out
 - 4 They took on forms which would spotlight the point of the story
 - a Miracle stories:
 - (1) Mark 1:40
 - (a) Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You can make me clean."

Topic

- (b) 41 Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed."
- (c) 42 As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed. 43* And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once,
- (d) 44 and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."
- (e) 45* However, he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction.
- (2) (1) A person and a need – a leper
 - (a) But the name of person was dropped
 - (b) Unless the community knew him
- (3) (2) An appeal by someone to Jesus – the leper, himself, in this case
- (4) (3) The response of Jesus -- He **touches the leper**
- (5) (4) The cure of the person -- the leper experiences an immediate and a complete cure
- (6) (5) The crowd reaction -- the man spreads word of what Jesus did with the result that Jesus is mobbed in public
- b **Saying stories**
 - (1) All details not relevant to help understand a wise saying of Jesus are dropped
 - (2) This saying is usually placed at or near the end of the story for emphasis
 - (3) **Mark 3:31**
 - (a) Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him. 32 And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You."
 - (b) 33* But He answered them, saying, "Who is My mother, or My brothers?" 34 And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers!"
 - (c) 35 "For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother."
- c **Controversies**
 - (1) Foes of Jesus are presented -- Pharisees and Herodeans
 - (2) These foes present some challenge to Jesus, a trap (usually an "honor/shame" battle)
 - (a) **Mark 12:13**
 - [1] Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words.
 - [2] 14 They came to him and said, "Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?
 - [3] 15 Should we pay or shouldn't we?" But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. "Why are you trying to trap me?" he asked. "Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." 16 They brought the coin, and he asked them, "Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?" "Caesar's," they replied.
 - [4] 17 Then Jesus said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." And they were amazed at him.
 - (b) Does Jesus advocate paying the tax which would lose Him Jewish support?
 - (c) Does Jesus advocate not paying the tax which could lead to denunciation to Pilate as a rebel, a traitor?
 - (3) Jesus responds to the challenge
 - (a) He asks for a coin
 - [1] It has Caesar's image
 - [2] And so it is Caesar's property
 - [3] Therefore it should be returned him
 - (b) In the same way Jesus implies
 - [1] You are God's image
 - [2] And so you are God's property
 - [3] Therefore you should be returned to Him -- all of yourself
 - (4) His saying defeats His opponents

Topic

- 5 Unimportant details were dropped with time
 - a Who
 - b Where
 - c When
- D Consequently, the Church possessed, with time, a collection of stories
 - 1 A group of isolated stories were remembered and retold without any reference to time or place
 - 2 Probably some collections of related stories were made
 - a Similar parables
 - b Controversies
 - c Miracles
- E The Passion enjoyed a unique position in the history of the Gospels
 - 1 The Passion was probably the first large section of stories about Jesus brought together
 - a From the Last Supper to the Burial
 - b But not any resurrection appearances
 - 2 The Passion was the real problem for the early Church
 - a It was the most shameful event according to the culture of the time: the Church bragged about a "crucified God and Savior"
 - b The Cross is romanticized today; it was not at the time of the Gospels: it was the most shameful means of execution
 - (1) Remember shame is stressed, not pain in each of the four differing Passion stories
 - (2) The goal of the Passion and Resurrection is to show God honoring the Shamed One, reversing all worldly values
 - 3 The Church needed to explain why it embraced a shamed, rejected Messiah
 - 4 Because the Passion was shaped early, the Passion displays the closest agreement in its presentation in all four Gospels