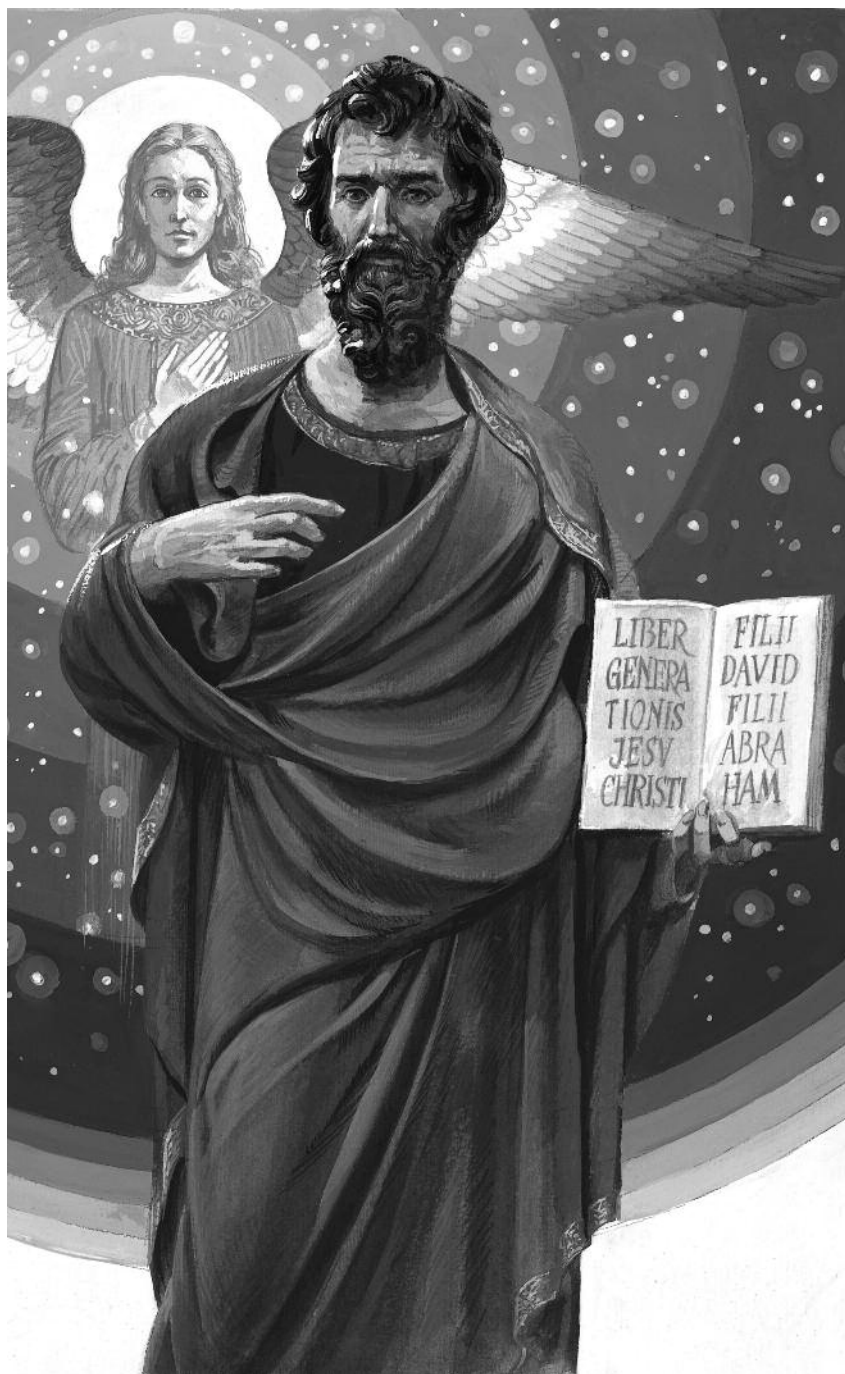


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Chapter 1

Who, When and Why

EACH of the four Gospels had a particular point of view. They all present the story of Jesus and His ministry. They all speak about the same events, but each one was written for a different community with its own particular needs.

Mark presents the basic story of Jesus as the Son of Man Who came to suffer and die for us. Luke presents a Jesus Who is filled with compassion and wisdom. John speaks of Jesus as a spiritual guide Who reveals the secrets of God.

Matthew is the most Jewish of the Gospels. It presents Jesus as the new Moses for the new Israel. It shows how Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the coming Messiah. Who was Matthew? Why did he write his Gospel? For whom did he write it? What are his main themes?

Who Wrote the Gospel?

TRADITION tells us that Matthew, the tax collector, wrote the first Gospel in Aramaic. This is why the Gospel is always placed as the first Gospel of the four in the New Testament. Is this tradition reliable?

A first difficulty we face is that we do not have a copy of the original Aramaic version. We only have the Greek version, which is the one we translate into our modern languages. Furthermore, when scholars examined the Greek version, they determined that it was not translated from Aramaic. One can almost always tell if a work is a translation or if it was originally written in that language. This Gospel was written in Greek. There are, for example, word plays in Greek that are obviously not translated from Aramaic. There are just no Aramaic words that could make the same word play.

A second difficulty is that the Gospel of Matthew often quotes the Old Testament to show that Jesus is the Messiah. Yet, Matthew was a tax collector and that was considered to be an unclean profession. How could a tax collector have known the Old Testament well enough to make all of these citations? It doesn't make sense.

Chapter 3

Mark the Editor

AT this point, it might be good to look at a few examples of how Mark used the cut and paste technique when he wrote his Gospel.

A first example of this technique is found in 1:40-45, the story of the healing of a leper. This is a standard miracle story with nothing all that extraordinary about it. The only question that scholars raise is, "When did it happen?" The information that immediately precedes it clearly occurred within a 24-hour period, the account of Jesus' first day at Capernaum. But there is no indication at the beginning of the story of the leper as to when it occurred in reference to the preceding material. Was it a day later, or a week later, etc.?

We have to remember that Mark often received pieces of information from his various sources. He did not always know when things occurred. This might very well be a miracle account that he knew was true and wanted to place in his Gospel, but did not know when it happened. He might have put it here to complete the thought that immediately precedes it, that Jesus was performing many miracles and this was therefore an example of those miracles. But it also prepares for the material that immediately follows it. There the scribes question Jesus' authority to forgive sins. Yet, we hear in the account of the leper that the healed man went to the leaders of the Jews to confirm his healing. They therefore knew that Jesus had the authority, but they chose to reject Him anyway. This made them guilty of much more than simple ignorance. They were consciously rejecting the truth of which they were aware. The account of the leper thus finishes the material that precedes it and prepares for what follows it.

A second example can be found in the accounts of the calling of the Disciples. The first two accounts are found in 1:16-20. We hear about the calls of Simon and Andrew and then of James and John. This material probably came from that outline of the ministry of Jesus that Mark used to form the skeleton of the first part of the Gospel. Then, in 2:13-14, we hear about the call of Levi the tax collector. If one reads the first two accounts and then

Why He Wrote the Gospel

NOW that we know who Luke was, we can ask why and when and where he wrote this Gospel.

Mark wrote his Gospel in a simple manner to tell the story of Jesus in a very unsophisticated way for the early Christian community that, according to Paul in First Corinthians, did not include many who were rich or educated. Matthew wrote his Gospel for Jewish Christians who had been expelled from the synagogue. We believe that Luke wrote his Gospel for an educated Gentile audience. His Gospel is much more literary than that of Mark or Matthew. He wrote in good Greek (actually very good Greek).

There is an ancient tradition that he wrote his Gospel in Southern Greece. He wrote it around 80-85 A.D., around the same time that he wrote the Acts of the Apostles and approximately the same time that Matthew was writing his Gospel (although it does not seem that Luke and Matthew knew about each other's Gospels for there are significant differences in their accounts, e.g., the infancy narratives).

What sources did Luke use for his account? We know that he (and Matthew) used the Gospel of Mark. He also used Q, which are those verses that one finds in Matthew and Luke but are not found in Mark. (Some scholars believe that it was Matthew, the tax collector and apostle, who collected the verses contained in Q.) His final source was one which is called "L." This was Luke's own particular material, e.g., that contained in the infancy and resurrection narratives as well as much of the material found from 6:20 to 8:3 and from 9:51 to 18:14. While Mark pasted his sources together as best he could and Matthew constructed an intricate matrix of material from his sources, Luke puts them together with an artistic touch that produces a masterpiece of literature.

A Complicated Prologue

LUKE begins his Gospel with a four-verse-long Prologue in which he sets out why he produced another Gospel. He pro-

Chapter 2

The Community of the Beloved Disciple

The Man Born Blind

WHY was the Gospel of John written? To answer this, we should look at the Gospel itself to see if there is any evidence there to help us to sort it out.

A good starting point is the story of the man born blind (chapter 9). There are a number of questions that arise as we look at the text. First of all, the Gospel of John centers on Jesus. Yet, Jesus all but disappears throughout the central two-thirds of this story. Why? Then when the man is brought before the Jewish officials for questioning, he is brought to the Pharisees. Where is the other major group of Jewish officials, the Sadducees? Third, we do not hear until verse 14 that this miracle occurred on the Sabbath. Why did it take so long for the author to state this? Fourth, when the Pharisees call in the parents of the man born blind for questioning, they do not say anything because it had already been agreed that anyone who said that Jesus was the Christ would be expelled from the synagogue. There are actually two problems here. First of all, this is occurring in Jerusalem. The place that one would be afraid of being expelled from was the temple, not the synagogue. Second, the decision to expel Christians from the synagogue was made much later, around 80 A.D. What is going on?

We can respond to all of these difficulties by stating that this is a story being told at two levels. At the surface level, this is a physical miracle that Jesus performed in 30 A.D. Jesus healed a man born blind on the Sabbath, and this got Him and the man into trouble with the Pharisees. At the second level, this is the story of a community that was spiritually blind and which came to know the light of the world. They were punished for their belief in Jesus as the Christ and were therefore expelled from the synagogue (sometime around 80 A.D.).

Why were they expelled? This part of the story dates to the decade after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D. Before it was destroyed, one could believe

THE MIRACLES OF JESUS DURING HIS PUBLIC LIFE

Water Made Wine: Jn 2:1-11.
 The Royal Official's Son: Jn 4:46-54.
 The Catch of Fishes: Lk 5:1-11.
 The Cure of a Demoniac: Mk 1:23-28; Lk 4:33-37.
 Peter's Mother-in-law: Mt 8:14-15; Mk 1:29-31; Lk 4:38-39.
 The Leper: Mt 8:1-4; Mk 1:40-45; Lk 5:12-19.
 The Paralytic at Capernaum: Mt 9:1-8; Mk 2:1-12; Lk 5:18-26.
 The Cure at Bethesda: Jn 5:1-15.
 The Man with a Shriveled Hand: Mt 12:9-13; Mk 3:1-6; Lk 6:6-11.
 The Centurion's Servant: Mt 8:5-13; Lk 7:1-10.
 The Widow's Son: Lk 7:11-17.
 The Blind and Dumb Demoniac: Mt 12:22.
 Calming of the Storm: Mt 8:23-27; Mk 4:35-41; Lk 8:22-25.
 Expulsion of the Demons in Gadara: Mt 8:29-34; Mk 5:1-20; Lk 8:26-39.
 Jairus' Daughter: Mt 9:18-26; Mk 5:21-43; Lk 8:40-56.
 The Woman in the Crowd: Mt 9:20-22; Mk 5:24-34; Lk 8:43-48.
 Two Blind Men: Mt 9:27-31.

The Possessed Mute: Mt 9:32-34.
 Five Thousand Fed: Mt 14:13-21; Mk 6:34-44; Lk 9:12-17; Jn 6:1-15.
 Jesus Walks on the Water: Mt 14:22; Mk 6:45-52; Jn 6:16-21.
 The Canaanite Woman: Mt 15:21-28; Mk 7:24-30.
 Healing of a Deaf-Mute: Mk 7:31-37.
 Four Thousand Fed: Mt 15:32-38; Mk 8:1-9.
 The Blind Man at Bethsaida: Mk 8:22.
 A Possessed Boy: Mt 17:14-21; Mk 9:13-28; Lk 9:37-43.
 The Temple Tax Provided: Mt 17:23-26.
 The Man Born Blind: Jn 9:1-38.
 The Crippled, Blind and Mute: Mt 15:29.
 A Woman Cured: Lk 13:10-17.
 The Raising of Lazarus: Jn 11:1-44.
 The Man with the Dropsy: Lk 14:1-6.
 Ten Lepers: Lk 17:11-19.
 The Blind Men at Jericho: Mt 20:29-34; Mk 10:46-52; Lk 18:35-43.
 The Fig Tree Cursed: Mt 21:18-22; Mk 11:12-14.
 The Servant's Ear Healed: Lk 22:49-51.
 The Catch of Fishes: Jn 21:1-14.

THE PRINCIPAL PARABLES OF JESUS

Children, The Wayward, Mt 11:16-19; Lk 7:31-35.
 Debtors, The Two, Lk 7:41-42.
 Fig Tree, A Sign of Summer, Mt 24:32-35; Mk 13:28f; Lk 21:29-31.
 Fig Tree, The Barren, Lk 13:6-9.
 Judge, The Corrupt, Lk 18:1-8.
 Kingdom, A Divided, Mt 12:25-27; Mk 3:23-26; Lk 11:17f.
 Laborers in the Vineyard, Mt 20:1-16.
 Merciless Official, The, Lk 18:21-35.
 Mustard Seed and the Leaven, Mt 13:31f; Mk 4:30-32; Lk 13:18f.
 Net, Parable of the, Mt 13:47-50.
 Pharisee and the Tax Collector, Lk 18:9-14.
 Rich Man and Lazarus, Lk 16:19-31.
 Rich Man, The Foolish, Lk 12:16-21.
 Samaritan, The Good, Lk 10:29-37.
 Seat, The Lowest, Lk 14:7-14.
 Seed, The, Mt 13:3-23; Mk 4:3-20; Lk 8:4-15.
 Seed, The Growing, Mk 4:26-29.

Servant, The Faithful and the Worthless, Mt 24:45-51; Lk 12:42-48.
 Servants, The Useless, Lk 17:7-10.
 Sheep, The Straying, Mt 18:12-14; Lk 15:3-7.
 Shepherd, The Good, Jn 10:1-21.
 Silver Pieces, The, Mt 25:14-30.
 Son, The Prodigal, Lk 15:11-32.
 Sons, The Two, Mt 21:28-32.
 Sums of Money, Parable of, Lk 19:11-27.
 Tenants, The, Mt 21:33-46; Mk 12:1-12; Lk 20:9-19.
 Treasure and the Pearl, Mt 13:44-46.
 Vigilance, Exhortation to, Mt 24:43f; Lk 12:39f.
 Vine, and the Branches, The, Jn 15:1-17.
 Watchfulness, The Need for, Mk 13:34-37; Lk 12:36-38.
 Wedding Banquet, The, Mt 22:1-14; Lk 14:16-24.
 Weeds, The, Mt 13:24-30.
 Wily Manager, The, Lk 16:1-13.
 Yeast, The, Mt 13:33.