

Note: Course resources utilized included NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible notes, ESV Bible and ESV Study Bible notes, John Sailhamer's Pentateuch as a Narrative, Stephen Dempster's Dominion and Dynasty, Tom Schreiner's The King in His Beauty, Carson, Moo, and Naselli's Introducing the New Testament, T. Desmond's Alexander's From Paradise to the Promised Land, Carson, Moo, and Morris Introduction to the New Testament, The Gospel According to John by D.A. Carson from the Pillar New Testament Series, The Letters of John by Colin G. Kruse from the Pillar New Testament Series, Bethlehem College and Seminary Old and New Testament Survey, Thirdmill.org website and others (TGC and TGC Online Commentaries).

*Intro to New Testament-
Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Acts*

Let's open with a word of prayer- shall we?

Today we resume our survey of the entire Bible, and we have finally arrived at the New Testament. Because of time constraints- we will forgo a more general overview of the New Testament- we will hold off on discussing matters such as how the New Testament came into being, and how the church came to recognize the 27 distinct books of the NT as the inspired Word of God. Those are matters that are taken up elsewhere in the Equip curriculum, for instance, it is covered in some measure in the doctrine of the Word class during Systematic Theology I. David White has covered that ground on more than one occasion, and his treatment is excellent and available.

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Today our scope is more narrow than the entire New Testament. Today we plan to look at the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke- what we refer to as the Synoptic Gospels. Because of the close connection between Luke and Acts, today's lesson will also include a discussion of the book of Acts.

Our plan is to cover the writings of John (his gospel and letters)- minus Revelation- in a separate class, Lord willing.

However, in our opening discussion of the Synoptic gospels, much of what is said will be applicable to John's gospel- and I will try to be relatively clear if all 4 gospels accounts are in view. Moreover, in order to limit redundancy in next week's class, I will go ahead lay some groundwork relevant to our treatment of John's Gospel as we move through today's material.

It goes without saying, but this will be high level, meaning we will enjoy the view of these books at flying altitude.

So let's begin.

As we taxi on the runway, let me remind us where we are departing from.

Over the last 2 weeks we wrapped up our study of the OT by looking at the prophets. Remember that the prophets were covenant enforcers, covenant prosecutors. The prophets were sent by God to show Israel how far they had veered from the obligations that came with the Mosaic covenant- making it clear that they were unfaithful to the Lord, who was their true king.

Because Israelites violated the covenant- they were covenant breakers- both the northern and southern kingdom were eventually sent into exile.

Therefore, the day of the Lord manifested itself in their day. It was not a day not of salvation, but a day of judgment. We see that played out in 1–2 Kings and 1–2 Chronicles, which recount the story of the downfall of Israel and Judah.

Although judgment was a conspicuous feature in the life of the nation, the salvation promised in Genesis 3:15, the seed of the woman who would crush the serpent's head, was still very much alive.

The promises to Abraham (concerning land, offspring, and coming king who would mediate worldwide blessing) was still very much alive.

So the prophets are not all doom and gloom- they also bring messages from God, full of hope for the future.

In the prophets' words we find the promise of a new and better exodus. We see the promise of new creation that exceeds Eden. We hear of a new covenant, where the Lord writes his law on the hearts of his people. And the prophets tell us that a new David will emerge- who is the Son of Man and the Servant of the Lord. He will redeem his people by suffering for their sake, by bearing the punishment that they deserve, thereby forgiving all their sins. He will inherit the kingdom, his people will rule and reign with him. The prophets also make it clear that these blessings are not limited to ethnic Israel. They are universal in scope- for through Abraham's offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Gentiles will be delivered through this promised new exodus, participants in the new creation and new covenant. One from the line of David will be their Savior and King, ruling them benevolently and atoning for their sin. These are glorious realities spoken to us by God through the prophets.

But as the OT draws to a close- we are left wondering and waiting. The serpent figure, whoever he is, has not been crushed. As the exiled nation slowly trickles back into the promised land, it doesn't look like a glorious new exodus or a marvelous deliverance. It still feels like exile. The people are still oppressed by foreign superpowers and barely cling to any sort of independence. The promises of the new covenant and new creation- have not been realized. Hearts are still

captivated by sin, the law is still spurned, the people are not exhibiting the new hearts promised in the New Covenant. And the new and better David, the coming king, has yet to step on the scene. The Lord God Almighty reigns over all the earth, but his saving promises for Israel and the world remain unfulfilled.

Has the word of God failed? May it never be. It is in our New Testament that we see the answer, the solution, the fulfillment.

At the outset of Christ ministry we read these words-

Mark 1:14–15 (ESV): 14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, 15 and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

And as Jesus begins his ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit- he enters a synagogue on the Sabbath. We read in-

Luke 4:17–21 (ESV): the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

18 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

20 And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21 And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

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In the fullness of time, Christ appears. The promises contained in the Old Testament find their answer in the person and work of Jesus Christ. In Christ, the king and the kingdom have come. And that is what our New Testaments are about.
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At this point, let us move into our survey proper.

The first four books of our New Testament are known as the Gospels. The fifth book of our New Testament is known as the Acts of the Apostles, or simply Acts. Acts, as you well know- if you were present for Pastor Jones' opening sermon, is closely connected to Luke's gospel. Both were written by Luke, and together represent a two volume work.

These first 5 books are rich with theological truth- essentially they teach us about God. But they are by no means written abstractly, nor are they written like a modern day textbook. They are historical books. They are real history, providing us with a historical and theological account of the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus and of the formation of the early Christian church.

The other 22 books of the New Testament function a little differently than these first 5 books do. The letters and Revelation contain many historical details, but are not historical narrative, they do not tell a story, in the same way the first 5 books do.

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Now- as we look more closely at the gospels- we must ask ourselves: What does the word “Gospel” mean?

The word gospel essentially reflects the Greek word for “good news”.

And what is the good news?

The good news is what God has done in Jesus Christ, namely in Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection- reconciling lost and guilty human beings to himself.

This good news, the gospel, is powerful and effectual, bringing with it remarkable transformation wrought in us by his Spirit- a transformation which is a foretaste of the resurrection existence in the new heaven and the new earth that will one day be our eternal home.

It is helpful to know that when first century AD followers of Christ used the word “gospel”- it always referred to the message about Christ and what he had done; the gospel proper. In identifying the four gospel accounts- first century Christians would refer to them as the gospel according to Matthew, the gospel according to Mark, the gospel according to Luke, the gospel according to John.

In other words, there was one gospel, the gospel of Jesus Christ= and Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John provided their inspired account of that one gospel. Only in the second century did Christians start referring to the books themselves as Gospels—Matthew’s Gospel (or the Gospel of Matthew), Mark’s Gospel (or the Gospel of Mark) and so on. Simply stated- in the early years of the church “gospel” referred to the message, not the writings that conveyed the message.

I tell you all of this in order to make 2 important points.

(1) Marking this distinction emphasizes that there is only one gospel, only one good news. There is not a multiplicity of gospels, each somehow different- but one unified gospel. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John bear witness to that one gospel, in sometimes different and sometimes complementary ways, but at the end of the day the gospel truth they proclaim is the same.

(2) Since Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all convey the truth about the one gospel, we will gain a clearer idea of what this one gospel is by closely observing what these four books have in common.

In all four accounts, we learn that the one gospel, the one good news, focuses supremely on Christ.

All 4 accounts draw attention to his coming, his incarnation, his ministry, his person and work, how he fulfilled what God promised long ago and in many ways.

All 4 convey the truth about Jesus' origin, his teaching and preaching, his miracles, and his interactions with sinners.

And without fail, and in no uncertain terms, all 4 gospel accounts present to us the fact of Jesus' death and resurrection.

In all 4 accounts we also find inspired explanations of what these events mean, of what God accomplished through Jesus to save his people, how Christ is ushering in the kingdom, and how Christ's incarnation and coming, his life, death and resurrection moves history toward its consummation.

As an aside, this is a huge reason why certain second-century documents should never be considered Gospels. For example, the so-called Gospel of Thomas, an ancient, untrustworthy manuscript composed in the second century- that bears the marks of Gnosticism. The Gospel of Thomas is a collection of 114 statements supposedly attributed to Jesus, plus two small portions of narrative. Without mentioning the fact that Thomas did not compose the work, the document in and of itself tells us nothing of Jesus' origin, miracles, death, or resurrection. In short, it does not convey the good news, the gospel.

Now the things I have just mentioned doesn't mean that we should change how we refer to the four. I will continue to refer to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as the Gospels.

But just understand that there are important distinctions- and as you encounter the unchurched, or people just coming along, we can be clear that there is only one God news, but 4 inspired historical accounts of the person and work of Jesus Christ that make up that good news.

Let's talk a little bit about the relationship among the Gospels and Acts and the relationship between the 3 Synoptic Gospels specifically. This will give us a general lay of the land before addressing each separately.

The first four NT books, the gospels- as we have mentioned, are historical narratives that tell the story of the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. These are the features that they all have in common. But a quick and casual reading of the 4 presents us with some differences as well.

I am confident that most of us here today have appreciated the fact that John feels a little bit different when compared to Matthew, Mark, and Luke. These three Synoptic means "seeing together". Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called Synoptic because they present Jesus in a very similar way: they often include the same material; they use many of the same words; at times they portray events in Jesus' life in the same sequence (which sometimes is topical rather than neatly chronological).

For example, Matthew, Mark, and Luke recount Jesus' parables. They show Jesus casting out demons. And with some minor variations, portray the death of Jesus in very similar ways. Jesus' emphasis on the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven is unmistakable in all 3 Synoptics.

By contrast, the Gospel according to John is different in its use of words and in some of the material covered. John's vocabulary is more restrained. John contains no parables or exorcisms. John says relatively little about the kingdom of God- rather he prefers to speak of eternal life.

Obviously there are points in common among all four books (for instance, all four give an account of Jesus feeding the 5,000). But John records several discourses not found elsewhere, including John 14–17, a long passage that comprises Jesus' farewell discourse on the evening he was betrayed in addition to Christ's high priestly prayer. In these ways the gospel according to John is notably different when compared to the 3 Synoptics.

The Gospel of Luke stands out as well- for reasons already mentioned- namely, its connection to the book of Acts. Together, Luke-Acts make up over one quarter of the New Testament- and no single human author has contributed to the corpus of the New Testament than Luke. Paul is second, having written just under one quarter, and John is third, having written about 20% of our New Testaments.

The book of Acts picks up where Luke leaves off. Acts provides a compelling narrative of the first decades of the church, especially as it centers on the ministries of the apostle Peter and the apostle Paul. It says very little about what the other apostles- although with a little work and careful reading, we can gain a better appreciation for their ministries as well.

Acts also shows how the gospel crosses one boundary after another: from Jerusalem to far corners of the Roman Empire, from Jew to Samaritan to Gentile, from the old covenant to the new, from the eastern end of the Mediterranean to Rome.

Acts is tied to Luke by a shared vocabulary and many common themes, after all they share the same human author- in both works we find an emphasis on prayer and on the work of the Holy Spirit. They both identify a common recipient- namely Theophilus (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1). We will talk more about that in a little bit.

*The book of Acts opens with these words- Acts 1:1 (ESV): 1 In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all **that Jesus began to do and teach.***

*These opening words give us the distinct impression that what Acts contains, what Luke is about to relay to his audience, are **the things that Jesus continued to do.** Acts therefore represents an extension of Christ's work, recounting for us what Christ did by his Spirit through His church after the resurrection and ascension. Luke is redemption accomplished. Acts is redemption applied in the context of the early church. As Acts opens this way, it reminds readers that the Jesus of the gospel accounts continues to reign as the Lord of the church, continues to reign as the Ruler over history, and is bringing about his sovereign, gracious purposes **as the resurrected Lord.***

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Let's talk now about how Matthew, Mark, and Luke relate to one another.

The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) display many similarities- after all they contain the one gospel. But they are certainly not identical. Therefore we should not write them off as redundant and repetitive.

For instance-Matthew appears to be written in a dominantly Jewish context. Matthew quotes extensively from the Old Testament, he is eager to show that Jesus is the promised Messiah- the Christ and the fulfillment of the Old Testament types, shadows, prophecies, and trajectories.

Mark has all the marks of an eyewitness account- he carries the gospel narrative forward with a sense of immediacy- the narrative moves along very quickly. There is an urgency as he demonstrates that Jesus is the suffering Son of God.

Luke has been described as "measured and polished". Luke repeatedly shows that Jesus is the Savior not only of the Jews but he is the Savior of the world- all people- with special attention given to the poor and oppressed.

Mind you these things constitute differences in emphasis- this doesn't imply that these themes are dealt with exclusively by a particular gospel account. Matthew doesn't have the market cornered on fulfillment themes, Mark isn't the only gospel written with the cross and sufferings of Christ in clear view. You get the idea. Sometimes notable differences between the gospels are really a matter of emphasis.

As we consider all these dynamics, the similarities, the differences, the emphases of any particular gospel, eventually we begin to ask ourselves how, in God's providence, did they come to be written?

About 91 percent of Mark is found in Matthew; about 53 percent of Mark is found in Luke. Matthew and Luke contain some common material that is not found in Mark. Did the writers have access to the work of the others- Using shared material to help inform their own inspired account?

Luke tells us plainly that he carefully studied other sources when he composed his book (Luke 1:1–3). There is no particular reason to think that Matthew and Mark refrained from the same practice. And such practices would not have lessened the inspiration- the God-breathed nature of the Scriptures. We can be comfortable with the fact that God works both extraordinarily and through ordinary means- all at the same time- in order to bring about a product that is uniquely His own.

Some trustworthy scholars suggest that Mark's Gospel may have been the first to be written, with both Matthew and Luke using Mark's account to compose their own Gospels. I am very comfortable with that possibility, as are many respected evangelical scholars. And this helps explain the similarities in content especially when the wording of the text is the same from one Synoptic to another.

And as you read the Synoptics- you will encounter some differences, and some differences can be hard for us to reconcile- however- a careful and considerate reading shows that the gospels do not contradict one another. In fact we see that they complement one another in an extraordinary way as God has used four different early Christian leaders to help his people understand the many facets of Jesus' life and teaching.

Therefore we should learn to appreciate the subtle differences we find among the Gospels. In giving us these inspired accounts of his Son through the hands of four different men, God has ensured at least two things:

(1) we have multiple consistent witnesses demonstrating the absolute trustworthiness of the accounts

(2) as those who have ready access to all 4 gospel accounts- we are privileged to enjoy the richness and depth of who Jesus is and what Jesus came to do. We can hear the story in stereo- in Surround Sound as it were. So when we approach the Gospels, in our study, we ought to appreciate the different aspects each account provides.

Differences aside, there is also value in putting their details together into one organic whole- creating what many refer to as a “harmony” of the Gospels. People have been organizing harmonies of the Gospels since at least the second century.

Nevertheless, these four books originally circulated separately, with different original audiences. The fundamental need for each original audience was the gospel, plain and simple, just like we need the gospel, but each gospel was wonderfully composed in such a way to also address peculiar needs- and we still benefit from that dynamic today- so it is important that we not lose the distinctive theological flavor of each work.

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Let's look more closely at The Gospel According to Matthew

When it comes to authorship, strictly speaking, all four Gospels are anonymous. There is no statement within them identifying the author. It is likely that the titles that we find at the top of the ancient documents- the gospel according to Matthew for instance, were later added after there was more than one Gospel account- at which point a title would help distinguish one gospel account from another.

With all that being said- the early church is unanimous in attributing the first gospel in our Bibles to Matthew, one of Jesus' 12 closest followers and a former tax collector. Matthew is also known as Levi (cf. 9:9–13 with Mark 2:14–17).

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Date of Composition

The second-century Christian writer Irenaeus declared that Matthew wrote “while Peter and Paul were preaching the Gospel and founding the church in Rome” (Against Heresies, 3.1.1). If Irenaeus is correct, this means Matthew was most likely written in the early to mid-60s AD, because the timeframe that Peter and Paul were together in Rome prior to their martyrdom. The early to mid-60s is the date that most conservative scholars agree on.

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Background, Occasion, and Purpose

What little ancient testimony we have (Irenaeus, Eusebius, Jerome) would suggest that Matthew wrote in the Holy Land or to Jewish believers in the Holy Land.

At any rate- early tradition simply affirms that he addressed predominantly Jewish Christians without reference to the destination of the document and without identifying where Matthew composed his account.

It may well be that Matthew was writing primarily to Jewish-Christians who had broken from the synagogue- or perhaps forced out of their local synagogues- because they accepted Jesus as the promised Messiah and Lord.

Whether such departure from the Jewish religious community was forced or by necessity- tensions between believing Jews and unbelieving Jews would not simply disappear.

The early Jewish followers of Christ would need peculiar encouragement and assurance. Matthew's Gospel would provide that.

Conflicts with key Jewish leaders would have catalyzed a shift to a more multiethnic church made up of believing Jews and Gentiles alike as believing Jews were forced out of the synagogue and religious community. Matthew's gospel paves the way for that dynamic- think about the Great Commission- "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations"- which is unique to Matthew.

Consider Matthew 21:43, a passage unique to Matthew- (ESV) where Jesus addresses hostile Jewish leaders of the day- "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits"

Matthew would have been burdened to demonstrate Jesus as the true and only way for a Jew to continue as one of God's elect people- and the make it clear to Jewish believers that they indeed are on the narrow way that leads to life.

Matthew 7:14 (ESV): For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

And he would have had many other burdens as he composed his gospel. For instance, Matthew is known for his references to the "church" (16:18; 18:17) and his warnings against false teachers- therefore Matthew may have been taking some of the first steps in order to implement organization within the early church as well as criteria for leadership.

Only Matthew uses the word "church" among the four Gospels (16:18; 18:17), teaching about its foundation and church discipline.

There are other aspects of Matthew's Gospel worth noting.

Matthew's depiction of Jesus focuses on his roles as Teacher perhaps most notably in what we refer to as the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5-7.

Matthew resonates with OT fulfillment themes. I cannot emphasize that enough. Matthew is the Gospel of fulfillment.

The promises made to Abraham and David, the blessings for Israel and the whole world, are realized in Jesus. Christ's connection to both Abraham and David are made explicit in Matthew 1:1 (ESV): The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Matthew gives special attention to Christ as the Son of David- showing that he is the long awaited Messianic king from David's line who would mediate blessings to the nations. Jesus was the Messiah- the anointed one- a designation that was tied to being king.

At the same time, Matthew portrays Jesus as preferring the title "Son of Man" for himself, which if you remember alludes to the exalted human who is ushered into God's presence to receive universal authority over the peoples of the earth in Daniel 7:13-14.

Jesus would refer to himself as the "son of man," and deliberately avoid titles like the Messiah during his earthly ministry. Within a culture that associated the coming of a Jewish king- descended from the line of David- with military and political domination, Jesus was exceptionally wary of being misconstrued and misunderstood. He was the Messiah king, but his followers had to first learn that his path to exaltation and enthronement would only come through suffering service.

In Matthew, Jesus is also the "Son of God," a title that in Jewish circles would be associated with the coming Davidic King- but brought with it overtones of divinity (e.g., 14:33; 16:16). He shows his divine authority and uniqueness as the Son of God by forgiving sins, calling people to be his disciples, walking on water, and stilling storms.

The most significant title for Jesus in Matthew is probably "Lord"—Jesus is both Master and God (e.g., 8:2, 6, 25; 9:28).

Jesus is the true Israel in Matthew- early in Matthew we see a young Jesus taken to Egypt by his parents as they flee Herod who wanted to destroy the child- later upon their return to the land of Israel- Matthew saw this as a fulfillment of the words of Hosea 11.1- Matthew 2:15 (ESV): "Out of Egypt I called my son."

So we have an explicit Christ-Israel connection. This is further reiterated in Christ temptation in the wilderness- where Israel failed in the wilderness- Christ proves utterly faithful.

His works of power, exorcisms, healings, and raising of the dead signaled the arrival of the new creation and the new exodus in Matthew. And we see the promised victory over the serpent in Genesis 3.15 has been won at the cross and in the resurrection of Christ.

Matthew also emphasizes that those who are disciples will live transformed lives. Remember that Matthew himself was a tax collector- radically forgiven and changed by Christ.

Finally- Disciples are commissioned to take the gospel to the ends of the earth, to all nations without exception. Jesus has called to himself a new community, the church. This is the new and true Israel, marked by obedience to the gospel.

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The Gospel According to Mark

Early church tradition unanimously ascribes the second gospel in our Bibles to John Mark, or more simply “Mark”.

Our fullest evidence comes from Papias (around AD 125) who records for us the claim that Mark was Peter’s younger associate who recorded accurately all of Peter’s various teachings about Jesus and compiled them into a single work.

Therefore church tradition has Mark writing while Peter is still alive- dating Mark's gospel to perhaps to the late 50s or early 60s AD. But there is some differing opinions.

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Place of Composition and Destination

Clear evidence is again lacking, but according to the majority of early tradition, Mark was written in Rome. In 1 Peter 5:13, Mark is with Peter in “Babylon,” usually understood to be Rome. Mark’s immediate audience would then include Rome’s Jewish and Gentile believers, but it could be that Mark ultimately envisioned a wider audience. He was careful to explain various Jewish customs and traditions- which indicate that his audience included Gentiles unfamiliar with such customs.

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Occasion and Purpose

No reason is given in the Gospel or later sources as to why Mark wrote what he did when he did.

Mark's emphasis on cross-bearing discipleship has led many to connect his gospel to persecution in Rome under Nero in AD 64–67. However, this timeframe is a little later than when we generally date Mark's gospel.

But that doesn't mean that Mark didn't have the persecution and suffering of God's people in mind as he composed his account. Believers knew suffering long before Mark composed his gospel. And certainly God, in His providence, would have used the truth in Mark's gospel to stabilize Christians under Nero a few years after it was composed- and widely disseminated in Rome. God has a way of anticipating our needs and put the pieces into motion long before the need becomes acute.

As we try to ascertain Mark's purpose- we must not forget the obvious. God's people, from the early stages of human history, and especially in ancient Israel, have been uniquely committed to preserving or writing down the acts and words of God. Mark, especially as he works closely with Peter, an eyewitness and close companion of Jesus, may have purposed to compose the gospel because of the overwhelming conviction that God himself was uniquely present in Jesus. This would have been more than enough reason to record the words and deeds of Christ for their own sake.

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Lets talk about Themes and Theology in Mark-

Bear in mind that I cannot proof text these things in this setting, we simply do not have time. Think about the next few minutes as establishing and strengthening categories within our minds.

1. The mystery of Jesus.

Although Jesus is clearly human, nevertheless, as God's beloved Son (1:11; 9:7), the Son of Man (e.g., 2:10, 28; 14:62), Isaiah's suffering servant (e.g., 8:31; 10:45), and the Davidic Messiah (e.g., 1:11 [see note]; 10:47), Jesus also clearly exercises God's unique authority (1:40–41; 2:10; 4:39; 6:48) and compassion (6:34; 8:2).

2. The character of God.

Since Jesus is divine, his actions reveal clearly who God is. And it is a compelling picture- where suffering service, and unthinkable self-giving is not incompatible with the divine. Mark 10:45 (ESV): For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

3. Discipleship.

Since in him “all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Col 2:9), doing God’s will now means following and listening to Jesus (Mark 3:34–35; 9:7; 10:21).

Just as God earlier had called Israel to reflect his character, so too must Jesus’ followers reflect his character, especially in self-denying, cross-bearing discipleship (8:34–38).

Holiness is a matter of the heart (7:15–23) and is expressed particularly in love of God—and therefore love for Jesus—and in how we treat others (9:35–10:16; cf. 12:30–31). Moreover, Jesus’ followers must be prepared to face the same kind of rejection he experienced.

4. The Messianic secret.

Jesus prevents the impure spirits (1:23–25; 3:11–12) and his disciples (8:29–30; 9:9) from revealing his identity until after his resurrection (9:9) because his true nature can be understood only from the foot of the cross (15:39). Jesus’s reasons for this, in my mind, are not unrelated to why Jesus was hesitant to placard himself as the Messiah- his true identity and mission could not be properly understood until after the cross.

5. Opposition and failure to understand.

From the outset Jesus encounters resistance from Israel’s leadership (2:1–3:6, 28–29; 11:18) and an abysmal lack of understanding in his disciples (4:13, 40–41; 6:52; 8:17–21, 33; 9:32). Both are addressed through Jesus’ parables that speak to the idolatrous blindness and deafness of the human heart that rejects God’s ways for its own (4:11–12).

Nevertheless, Israel’s religious leaders do ultimately reject Jesus (14:61–64). As a result, their temple will be destroyed (13:1–2), and the stone they rejected will become the cornerstone of a new temple in which all nations can worship (12:10).

6. Salvation.

Embedded throughout Mark are new Exodus themes- Mark appeals to the events of the exodus and especially Isaiah’s promised new exodus. In other words, Mark contains themes of the salvation and deliverance that Jesus brings.

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The Gospel According to Luke

As I have already mentioned- The Gospel of Luke is the first installment of the two-volume work, alongside the book of Acts.

Although the author does not explicitly identify himself, the evidence pointing to Luke is compelling. The oldest manuscript- from the late second century AD-names Luke as the author in its attached title, and the early church fathers, beginning with Irenaeus, support Luke's authorship. The content of both works confirm this. There are passages in Acts where the author writes "we" —for instance Acts 16:10 (ESV): 10 And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

And there are other passages like this. (Acts 16:10–17; 20:5–15; 21:1–18; 27:1—28:16)

These passages are best understood as coming from the pen of a companion of Paul, and Paul's own writings suggest that Luke was one of his co-workers (Col 4:14; 2 Tim 4:11; Phlm 24).

Paul's further identification of Luke as a physician (Col 4:14) is consistent with several aspects of the third Gospel, such as its prologue (1:1–4), which is similar in length and style to scientific writings of the day.

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Date of Composition

There is a lack of consensus regarding dating this Gospel, although we can assume that it was written after Mark and before Acts. Taking into consideration the fact that Luke was a companion of Paul, it is reasonable to assume that Luke wrote his two-volume work around AD 70.

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Intended Audience

Luke addresses both his Gospel and Acts to a certain "Theophilus" (1:1; Luke 1:3). The name means "one who loves God," and some claim that it refers to those seeking God in general or perhaps all believers. More likely it is an individual since Greek literature attests to the proper name and since Luke refers to him as "most excellent" (Luke 1:3), a title typical for an individual of high social status. There are various suggestions concerning his identity: (1) a questioning unbeliever, (2) a new believer in need of teaching, (3) a government official, or (4) a patron who sponsored the production and circulation of Luke's Gospel. Though these are not all mutually exclusive, the last option has a lot working in its favor.

In the ancient world, the time and expense necessary for producing volumes like Luke and Acts were enormous, and would need a sponsor and authors would commonly dedicate the commissioned work to their sponsors.

Although addressed to what appears to be a single individual, make no mistake about it, Luke-Acts clearly addresses a wider audience. This audience is almost certainly believers rather than unbelievers since Luke's primary purpose appears to be the confirmation, strengthening and assurance for those who already have faith in Jesus.

Luke 1:4 (ESV): that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

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Besides strengthening believers, Luke's gospel has other important emphases.

For instance- the proclamation and advance of the gospel. This is a theme Luke shares with Acts- the gospel according to Luke establishes the foundation and center of the gospel, while Acts depicts the power of this gospel as it spreads throughout the Roman world.

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Several other significant themes stand out in Luke's presentation of the life and mission of Jesus:

1. He wants to show that Christ is the fulfillment of God's promises and plan of salvation. Luke uses the Old Testament, much like Matthew, to emphasize that the life of Jesus is the climax of salvation history. Luke alludes to the OT throughout the birth narrative (chs. 1–2) and explicitly quoting extensively from Isaiah when introducing Jesus' ministry (e.g., 3:4–6; 4:18–19).

Luke frequently uses titles for Jesus that connect him with recurring themes and paradigms that begin in the OT. Introducing Jesus as the Messiah in the birth narrative (1:32–33, 68–75; 2:8–14) places him within the Davidic royal line.

Jesus is presented as the ultimate prophet (4:16–31; 13:33; 24:19) fulfilling the roles of Moses, Elijah, and Elisha. Jesus was Luke 24:19 (ESV): a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.

By identifying Jesus as the Son of God, Luke not only emphasizes Jesus' divinity (22:70) but also his role as the new obedient Adam, the representative head and progenitor of a new humanity (3:38).

In Luke, we learn more about the person and work of the Holy Spirit. In the birth narrative, Luke draws attention to the Holy Spirit's intensive activity in the incarnation of Christ- a passage we remember this time of year.

Luke 1:35 (ESV): 35 And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.

There is Luke 3:22 where (ESV): the Holy Spirit descended on Christ in bodily form, like a dove.

Christ says in Luke 4:18 (ESV): 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

Attention given to the Holy Spirit clearly spills over into Acts- where we see the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2:17 in fulfillment of Joel's prophecy.

Amid all of these things - we cannot lose sight of the fact that Luke emphasizes that Jesus saves sinners. It was written to believers for their edification, but it is evangelistic as well. Luke makes it clear that Jesus is (ESV): the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." (19:10). And as it pertains to established believers, the same gospel that saved us- Luke loves the expression "save"- it the same gospel that keeps us.

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Finally let's consider the book of Acts-

We will forgo matters of author and audience- since what was said of Luke is essentially applicable to the book of Acts.

The "Acts of the Apostles" serves as a bridge between the stories of Jesus' life and the various letters in our New Testament that instruct churches about Jesus' significance. This book tells the story of the expansion of the early church, from the 120 disciples gathered together on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem to significant numbers of believers scattered all over the Mediterranean world—including the great center of the world in that day- Rome. The title "Acts of the Apostles" (abbreviated to "Acts" in the NIV) was given to the book not by its author but by later Christians who recognized the prominence of Peter (chs. 1–12) and Paul (chs. 13–28) in the book. A better title might be "Acts of the Holy Spirit" because the author is especially keen to show how God's Spirit, poured out on the church at Pentecost, is the power behind the apostolic preaching of the word of God.

If the Gospel of Luke is about "all that Jesus began to do and to teach" (Acts 1:1), Acts is about what Jesus continues to do through his disciples in the power of the Spirit. I have mentioned

already that the Holy Spirit features prominently in Acts- guiding and filling believers and empowering ministry for the glory and fame of Christ.

Acts shows us time and again the unstoppable progress of the gospel- and outlines its certain trajectory: beginning in Jerusalem and moving outward in concentric circles through Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Since Jones is preaching through the book- I will keep this basic and unsatisfactory.

In addition to what has already been said about Acts this morning- there are several other themes. I will simply name them with little to no expansion.

In Acts we see God's sovereign purpose in salvation history. Throughout Acts, Luke seeks to show that all that happened—Jesus' coming and the early church's growth and expansion—is part of God's purpose and plan. Luke draws attention to how God is guiding and orchestrating everything that happens.

Gamaliel spoke better than he knew, and his words are thematic- Acts 5:38–39 (ESV): if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; 39 but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!"

His words are prophetic. Throughout the rest of Acts, the gospel faces incredible opposition and obstacles- but continues its advance. It is unstoppable because nothing can thwart God's sovereign purpose.

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Q and A

Matthew, in composing his Gospel, regularly identifies Jesus as the Christ. The title "Christ" is used quite often in the birth narratives (1:1, 16, 17, 18; 2:4), so that the reader knows from the outset that Jesus is Christ the king. The most important text is 16:13–20, where Peter declares that Jesus is the Christ, though subsequent events reveal that Peter did not understand the nature of Jesus' messianic ministry. Peter's declaration functions as one of the climaxes in Matthew's narrative, demonstrating that Jesus' disciples are finally beginning to grasp his identity.

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Matthew 16:13–20 (ESV): 13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of

the living God.” 17 And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. 18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” 20 Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

Matthew 16:21–23 (ESV): 21 From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. 22 And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” 23 But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

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Mark 8:27–33 (ESV): 27 And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” 28 And they told him, “John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.” 29 And he asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Christ.” 30 And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.

31 And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

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Luke 9:18–22 (ESV): Peter Confesses Jesus as the Christ

18 Now it happened that as he was praying alone, the disciples were with him. And he asked them, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” 19 And they answered, “John the Baptist. But others say, Elijah, and others, that one of the prophets of old has risen.” 20 Then he said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” And Peter answered, “The Christ of God.”

21 And he strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one, 22 saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.”