**Gospels**

* **Brief Introduction of Guest-** Dr. Erin M. Shaw, Cedarville University
* **Describe the literary style this episode is covering**

We are covering the Gospel in this episode. 4 in all- Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These are considered theological biographies and are unique in comparison to the other books in the Bible. They all describe events and teachings from the life of the Messiah, Jesus. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the synoptic gospels because they are similar in the events that they cover. John was more selective in the events that he included. The Gospels are the good news of Jesus.

* **Where do we see this style being used in Scripture and how is it used in the metanarrative?**

If you use the metanarrative described by Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration. The Gospels describe Redemption. Starting with the OT, after the fall of man into sin, God gives us the first piece of good news- this is in Gen. 3:15-the seed of the woman will come to defeat the serpent. The Gospels highlight the coming of this promised seed in Jesus. We also see in the OT, in 2 Sam. 7 specifically, that the Israelite King David was promised that from his line there would be a king whose reign will never end, his throne will be established forever. The Gospels show Jesus’ connection to a Davidic line and that He is the Messiah. Indeed, all of the law and Prophets of the OT point to and find their fulfillment in Jesus. Jesus himself describes this in Matt. 5:17-18- He says- “**17**“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. **18**For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.” The Gospels demonstrate how Jesus fulfilled this Law through his life, death, and resurrection. They capture the most pivotal moments in all of human history. But while, the promises in the Old Testament of salvation for sinful man are fulfilled in Jesus, they are not fully realized until Christ’s return. There is a wonderful tension in the New Testament that is described as “Already, not yet.” In other words…The kingdom and reign of Jesus has been inaugurated, as expressed in the Gospels, but not yet fully consummated. There are promises that we already enjoy now- for example Jesus atoned for our sins by his death and resurrection and secured our justification by grace through faith. However, we still live in fallen world and our bodies feel the effects of death. At Christ’s return we will be given resurrected bodies and all of creation will be entirely made new.

* What are some nuances or purposes of this literary style (provide examples)?

It is important to look at the purpose that each individual author had in writing each of the Gospels.

Matthew’s gospel is written to show his fellow Jews that Jesus is the Messiah. He begins with a genealogy of Jesus declaring He is the son of David and the son of Abraham. The link to David reminds the readers that He is the promised king and the link with Abraham reminds people that not only is Jesus the Messiah of the Jews, but He is the Messiah for all nations. It was through the promise given to Abraham (Gen. 12, 22) that God declared all nations would be blessed. The theme of all nations is repeated in the Great Commission passage that commands believers to make disciples of all nations. Another feature to notice is that Matthew writes of the events he does to point out their fulfillment to prophecy.

Mark- Early church fathers attribute Mark’s authorship to Peter and it was said to be recorded by John Mark. Mark has a theme of discipleship. It also has a common theme of events and action, things often happen immediately. Many of these events demonstrate Jesus having authority as the Son of God. However, Mark slows down when it comes to the final week of Jesus’s ministry. It devotes a large portion discussing this and thus shows the importance of Jesus being the suffering Son of Man and suffering servant.

Luke’s audience is Gentile Christians. Luke like Acts is written to Theophilus- who he is exactly is not known, but many think he is a real person. Luke tells us how he compiled the gospel and why in the first 4 verses: “Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, **2**just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, **3**it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, **4**that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.” He wanted those that read to have certainty that what they believed was true. He includes a genealogy that goes back to Adam to show that Jesus is the hope promised in the beginning. Luke highlights all kinds of people- individuals, poor and outcast, children, but of special note for this podcast is that he mentions 13 women that are not mentioned in any other gospel (Guthrie). For example, the widow of Nain whose son was raised and the sinful woman who anointed Jesus with an alabaster flask of ointment (Luke 7). He also gives attention to Mary and Elisabeth at the birth and the woman at the resurrection.

John gives us his purpose in writing in 20:30-31 “**30**Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; **31**but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” He emphasizes that Jesus is the promised Messiah, Son of God, sent by God and that those who believe in Jesus can have eternal life. He begins by presenting Jesus as the incarnate Word. God in the flesh. He gives the famous “I Am” statements showing how each role relates to God. Jesus is the light of the world, the resurrection and the life, the good shepherd, the bread of life, and the vine). Jesus reveals God. John also gives seven signs performed by Jesus, a smaller number that the synoptics, but these purposefully demonstrate how Jesus is better than the Jewish institutions at the time. John also spends a lot of time teaching on the role of the Holy Spirit.

* **What are some challenges when studying Scripture written in this literary style?**

Within the overarching genre of gospel there are literary challenges hiding within as they use a wide range of literary devices: narratives, discourse, and parables. We must be active observers of the text to know what we are reading.

Here are some common questions:

1. **Does the Bible contradict itself because it appears there are different accounts of the same events?**

First, I have a firm conviction that the Bible does not contradict itself. Scripture is God-breathed. A perfect God would not deliver a Word to us that is imperfect. Second, it is helpful to remember the purpose the author had in including it. They may highlight different things at the event to support their topic. Third, reading different accounts of the same event provides a fuller picture of the event. My former pastor used to give an illustration of 4 people standing and four corners of an intersection observing a car crash. All of them saw the same crash, but when retelling of the account to the police, they will tell 4 similar and accurate accounts but with 4 completely different perspectives. This is similar to the people in the Gospels.

1. **Why are the Gospels not perfectly chronological?** Again remember the author’s purpose is retelling that teaching and event. There are topical and thematic reasons why they are not arranged that way.
2. **How do I understand a parable?** Jared Wilson, in his book *The Storytelling of God,*

<https://www.crossway.org/articles/how-should-we-read-jesuss-parables/>

describes common misconceptions about parables- WILSON says “they are not moral fables (too simplistic), secret codes (parables are both simple and complex, but not that complex, they are more straightforward), not allegories (Allegory is a form of literature in which material figures represent immaterial virtues or vices. The parables of Jesus could be said to contain allegorical elements, some more than others, but they are not strictly speaking themselves allegories. Jesus definitely deals in the world of virtues and vices, but he is most immediately interested in the world of human beings, their hearts, their words, and their deeds) not sermon illustrations (they do illustrate to some degree, but parables often confused disciples rather than clarified thoughts)… they are wisdom scenes- they illustrate wisdom and are windows in to the coming kingdom.”

I think one of the more difficult things as a reader is rightly identifying with the correct person in the parable- often I will place myself as the more virtuous one, when I may actually be the one in error.

1. **Are the Words of Jesus more inspired than the rest? In other words- should I value the red letters more than the rest?**

I would say no because it is all inspired. I am going to read to you two passages that I think confirm this….

**16**All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,**17**that the man of Godmay be complete, equipped for every good work.- 2 Tim. 3:16

**20**knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. **21**For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.- 2 Peter 1:20-21 Peter is giving an argument that Scriptures were inspired not by man, but the Holy Spirit- Again all of Scripture is from God.

Jesus’s word and the rest of Scripture are equally inspired.

* **What are some helpful tips when studying Scripture written in this literary style?**

1. Locate the author’s purpose: Observe the teaching point being made
2. Don’t attribute extensive allegorical meanings to parables- a field does not represent something more, it is a field
3. Keep in view what the text is saying or teaching about Jesus
4. Take time to delight in the fulfillment of prophecy
5. Follow normal means of good biblical interpretation

* **How does this literary style point to Christ and the Gospel?**

All of it is about Jesus!

* **Recommended Resources (books, podcasts, etc on the topic for further reading)**
  + *Dig Deeper: Tools of Understanding God’s Word* by Nigel Beynon and Andrew Sach
  + ESV Study Bible
  + *Reading the Gospels Wisely* by Jonathan Pennington
  + *Introduction to the New Testament* by DA Carson and Douglas Moo
  + [According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible](https://www.amazon.com/According-Plan-Unfolding-Revelation-Bible/dp/0830826963/?tag=thegospcoal-20) by Graeme Goldsworthy
  + *The Storytelling of God* by Jared Wilson
  + *Reading the Bible Supernaturally* by John Piper
  + *Exegetical Fallacies* by DA Carson
  + *Introduction to the Gospel of John* by DA Carson
  + *His Mission: Jesus in the Gospel of Luke* by DA Carson
  + [*The Servant King: The Bible’s Portrait of the Messiah*](https://www.amazon.com/Servant-King-Bibles-portrait-Messiah/dp/1573832634/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1314480902&sr=8-1) by T. Desmond Alexander

A few examples of different chronological order in the Gospels:

-The synoptic Gospels keep a general outline of events- Jesus’s birth, start of his ministry, his death, but in between there are variations

-The temptations of Christ are in a different order in Luke and Matthew 4:5-11 and Luke 4:5-13

-Mark has a series of events- Matthew does 5, 6, 7- Sermon on the Mount- and then 8, 9 a listing of miracles- Matthew has a strong topical order