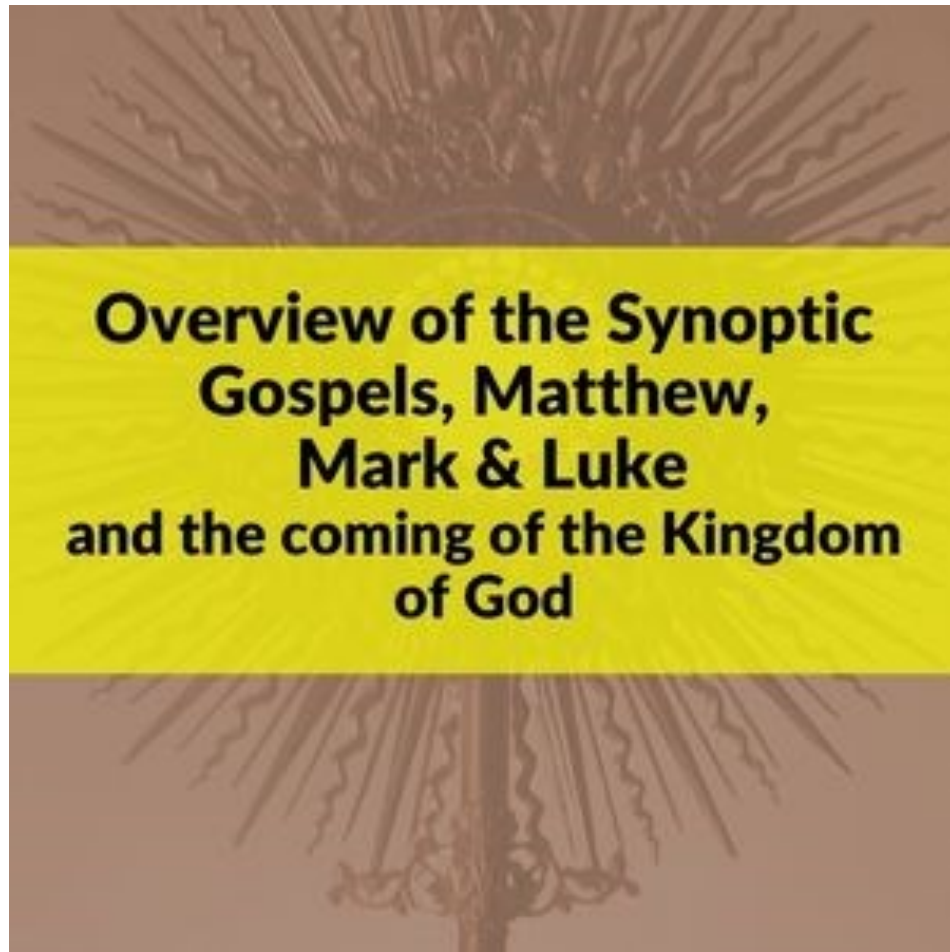


Handouts

Including

Notes and Questions



How do we know what we're told about Jesus is true?

- *Wasn't the New Testament written hundreds of years after He lived?*
- *How do we know it isn't just legends about a good teacher?*
- *And why did some books get included and others didn't?*
- *These questions and more we'll answer in our lesson today.....*

Your Notes

Overview of the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark & Luke

and the coming of the Kingdom of God

Yvon Prehn, teacher

All that the Old Testament prepared us for is now reality

- In truth, all we've studied in the Bible has led up to where we are now—the incarnation of Jesus, his birth and of Him becoming permanently flesh and blood—Emmanuel, God with us.
- Though He never really left.....
- He was present at creation, *Col. 1:¹⁵ Christ is the exact likeness of the unseen God. He existed before God made anything at all, and, in fact, ¹⁶ Christ himself is the Creator who made everything in heaven and earth, the things we can see and the things we can't; the spirit world with its kings and kingdoms, its rulers and authorities; all were made by Christ for his own use and glory. ¹⁷ He was before all else began and it is his power that holds everything together. NLV*
- And when He created humanity he walked with them in the perfect world He created. Their sin broke that relationship. But God didn't give up on humanity.

He was the promised Messiah from the earliest days

- Immediately following Adam and Eve's sin. (Gen. 3:15f) God clothed them with skins of a sacrificed animal and promised one day Satan would be crushed by a Messiah who would come.
- The sacrificial system of the Old Testament pictured how that Messiah would be the perfect sacrifice for sins and in enacting it and living the commands of the Covenant the Jewish people were to illustrate God's coming plan of salvation.
- As it says in Exodus 19 verses 5 – 6 *Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice, and keep my covenant, then you shall be my own possession from amongst all peoples; for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."*
- This idea that no matter what earthly kingdom might appear to be in charge, God's people were always a set-apart people, people of the Kingdom of God, with God as their true King, grew through the messages of the prophets with 65 very specific to over 500 references to Jesus and his coming reign and kingdom in the Old Testament.
- Here are some of them--

More than just a person, an all-encompassing government

- *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
⁷ Of the greatness of his government and peace*

*there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever. Isaiah 9:6-7*

The idea of a kingdom where God is in charge is repeated

- Daniel 2:44 "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, nor will its sovereignty be left to another people; but it will break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it will stand forever.
- Zechariah 9:9-10 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem; and the bow of war will be cut off. And He will speak peace to the nations; and His dominion will be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

The kingdom was a promise, a vision, a prayer throughout the Old Testament

- *May he endure as long as the sun,
as long as the moon, through all generations.
6 May he be like rain falling on a mown field,
like showers watering the earth.
7 In his days may the righteous flourish
and prosperity abound till the moon is no more.
8 May he rule from sea to sea
and from the River to the ends of the earth. Ps. 72:5-8*
- *Deliverers will go up on Mount Zion to govern the mountains of Esau.
And the kingdom will be the Lord's. Obediah 21*
- Idea of a king ruling over a Kingdom of righteousness, prosperity, and peace was a constant through the Old Testament—the present system is NOT how our world was designed to be.

Then came 400 years of silence

- The silence is broken by the promised forerunner of the Kingdom appearing out of the desert and announcing
- Matthew 3:2 "**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.**" or as the Message translation puts it
- "**Change your life. God's kingdom is here.**"
- To inaugurate the Kingdom, we see Jesus, the Lord of eternity, incarnated, Now made flesh and blood, tangible and touchable walking among with His creation
- That's what the Gospels are all about.

The Gospels are not traditional biographies

- There are 4 of them: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John
- 3 very similar in content: Matthew, Mark, Luke
- Called "synoptic gospels" meaning having a similar view
- John very different
- Each for different audiences—more on that in a bit

Why we are reading them the way we are

- Many plans have you read all 4 together, reading the various events at the same time.
- I think that is not the best idea – what is the point of simply reading how different writers described the same event?

- That destroys the flow of each book and obscures the audience and purpose of the book.
- Our plan has you read all three synoptics early on book by book to lay a foundation for all that follows in the New Testament.
- Even though chronologically the Gospels were written AFTER many of the epistles—the letters to the new churches—it makes sense to read them first as the events in them took place first.
- We are reading John at the end of our reading as it was one of the last books written and a good review of the life of Jesus and a preparation for the final Revelation of him.

Overall

- Not traditional biographies with the childhood and all of Jesus' life included—little of that is there.
- Selective in what they talk about.
- Each has a specific audience in mind and an emphasis tailored to that audience,
- In this lesson we'll go over each one briefly, plus we'll discuss the overarching theme of the Kingdom of God,
- In the next lessons
 - *What isn't in the New Testament*—about gnostic thought and the Gnostic Gospels
 - *What the Gospels tell us about the Trinity*
- This is the pattern of the Bible805 lessons—large themes that cover large sections of the daily reading.
- NEW this time—daily videos on www.YouTube.com/Bible805 that go over the daily readings, plus additional social media inspirations and commentary.

Matthew

- Written by Jesus disciple Matthew, a former tax collector.
- Audience very clearly a Jewish one—he doesn't explain Hebrew terms, assumes familiarity with Old Testament.
- A bridge between the Old Testament and New Testament.
- Constantly talks about how the various things that happened in Jesus' life, the things that he did fulfilled prophecies in the Old Testament.
- Clear goal to show that Jesus was the fulfillment of the promised Messiah.
- 50 direct quotations from the OT, plus 75 allusions to OT events.
- Mark each time this happens to see the pattern of it.

Commentary on Matthew

- *Even though Matthew's thrust is decidedly Jewish, he is also aware of the fact that the Gentiles have an appointed place in the kingdom of God. Accordingly, he attempts to condition Hebrew thinking with this concept. He alludes to those who will come from afar to sit with the patriarchs in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 8:11), and he plainly declares that the Gentiles have hope in the name of Christ (Matt. 12:21). And Matthew's account of the Great Commission is universal in its scope (Matt. 28:18ff).*
- <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/273-examining-the-four-gospels>

Mark

- His authority for writing it was that he worked closely with Peter, Jesus' disciple and was also cousin of Barnabas who traveled with the Apostle Paul.
- His background is that he quit traveling with Paul, later traveled with

Barnabas, reconciled with Paul, and later worked with Peter.

- His audience was the Roman world and tradition tells us he wrote it from there, during the time of persecution of Christians.
- Mark wrote for a Gentile audience, as is brought out by his **not including** things important to Jewish readers (genealogies, Christ's controversies with Jewish leaders of His day, frequent references to the Old Testament, etc.). Mark emphasizes Christ as the suffering Servant, the One who came not to be served, but to serve and give His life a ransom for many ([Mark 10:45](#)).
- He did this to encourage those suffering as servants of Christ.

Commentary

- *Whereas Matthew emphasized the words of the Lord, Mark, while recording only one major sermon (Mk. 13:3-37), underscores Christ's deeds. He characterizes Jesus as a servant who came to do the Father's will—and, servant-like, he did so with great urgency. Mark uses the servant's word, euthus ("immediately"), fourteen times in describing the activities of the Savior.*
- <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/273-examining-the-four-gospels>

Luke

- Luke specifically tells us why he did what he did:
- *"Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught."* —Luke 1:1–4
- He was a careful observer
- Also obviously interviewed and talked particularly to the women associated with Jesus—much about Mary.
- The only Gentile writer of the New Testament and writes for a Gentile audience, his authority came from his companionship with Paul.

Commentary

- *Luke provides first-rate testimony for the genuineness of Jesus' miracles. A scientist by profession, he had thoroughly investigated the claims of Christ's supernatural works (he mentions twenty of them, six of which are unique to him), and he treats them as historical reality. (and his history and sources good evidence for his reliability...)*
- *Moreover, the evidence for the Lord's virgin birth must have been overwhelming for a doctor to acknowledge it and argue the case as strongly as Luke did (Lk. 1:26-38).*
- <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/273-examining-the-four-gospels>

All the Gospels contain the theme of the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of heaven

- There are many themes we can talk about, but here is an overarching one—**the Kingdom of God, what is it?**
- ***It is where God truly reigns, where His will is followed.***
- It is BOTH the future—in that it will happen in totality when Jesus returns and renews all things.
- And yet—and here is the challenge—it has broken into our world with the coming of Jesus.
- It is the answer to the prayer, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

It is present *and not yet*

- The reality of the Kingdom of God, *both present and not yet*, is one of the great challenges and tensions of the Christian life
- The question is, how do we live in this present world with a Kingdom mindset?
- The lesson follows with some thoughts on it.
- Let's look first at our King because He characterizes the Kingdom.

He wasn't what people expected Him to be

- Starting with the people who knew him well--
- *Luke 4: 16 the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:*
- ¹⁸ *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*
- ²⁰ *Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. ²¹ He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."*
- Their response was to mock and attempt to stone him.

What *did* He do and what did they not expect

- In addition to his hometown simply rejecting everything he had to say, others had expectations that the Messiah would come and immediately do GREAT THINGS.
- Yet said, He was there to proclaim "good news to the poor" (and quoted the Old Testament passage to support it) those poor in many ways, in spirit, in health and wealth and every way in the world—they are the ones who were His priority through all his earthly life, those he chose to follow him, who he ministered to.
- He expects his followers to do the same—And Jesus is consistent with that priority in Matthew 25, where at the end of the age, he separates those who followed Him from those who did not, where He says.....
- *"I was hungry and you gave me something to eat"....and the many ways of giving to the poor, Jesus said we give to Him and in what people do is how they will be judged. Not loud, demanding, self-righteous things...living a life that is "good news for the poor."*

Again and again, He went against expectations

- He stated clearly that he did not come to judge, but to show mercy
- *Matt.9:13, "I desire mercy not sacrifice."*
- *Recalling Micah 6:8, "What does the Lord require? To do justly, love mercy, walk humbly with your God."*
- He expresses this characteristic in many places, warning an unjust servant who had been forgiven and wouldn't forgive a fellow servant, reminding Peter he needed to forgive 7x70—an unlimited amount (both stories in Matt.18).
- In looking at his example, I look at myself and ask ***HOW did we get the idea that in being harsh and demanding is a representation of Jesus?***

Think about it—if someone doesn't do what we want, expect, what they should

- We consider ourselves justifiably angry—we want them to pay or be judged or at least shamed and ignored.
- Israel had rejected and disobeyed God for thousands of years.
- One would think the King would come in wrath, but He didn't
- John 3:16, 17 God so loved....Jesus didn't come to condemn, but to save.
- Most of us know our own sins, when we fall short, but few know a way out, really out of them, that's what Jesus came to provide
- ***Being like our King, part of His kingdom means a redemptive, not judgmental posture and attitude towards those who sin.***
- Note the book on "Dechurching" and how much of it has to do with people in the church not willing to listen to questions.

In contrast, look for specific descriptions of the Kingdom of God as you read the Gospels

- Though everything Jesus says and does is about the Kingdom breaking in—that is why the miracles, healing, abundant food, peace to troubled spirits—all illustrations of the Kingdom Life. Yet, look for specifics, where the Kingdom is mentioned, like the following--
- **Matthew 13:44-46** "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.
- ***Worth all we can give for it or give up for it.***
- **Matthew 13:31-43** He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches." He spoke another parable to them, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened."
- ***Not obvious in its growth, but sure in outcome.***

And more....

- **Matthew 25:1-13**"Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. "Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. "For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them.
- ***Commentaries say it is a warning to those simply going along with the crowd, who do not truly have the Holy Spirit within them.***
- **Matthew 25:14-30**
- "For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents.
- ***Often so misinterpreted, as not everyone hears "Well done, good and faithful servant."***
- ***Christianity is not about us, about what we can get out of it, we are saved to serve, to be productive in our faith—how we might do that is different for all, but we all need to be about doing our Lord's business.***

Closing challenge

- Not only are we citizens of the Kingdom of God when we follow Jesus as Savior, but He honors us and makes us His Ambassadors
- *Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. **2 Corinthians 5:20***
- Just as He sent out His disciples to share the good news, so too, He has a plan for us,
- We are to be the yeast permeating society, the lights in the world wherever we are, showing people what it means to be citizens of the Kingdom of God, until our rightful King returns.
- I pray we all do that well!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Intro to the New Testament, the importance of reliable dating

1. Where was Jesus before he was born as a baby in Bethlehem?
2. How is the Kingdom of God described in the Old Testament? What are some of the defining characteristics of it?
3. How are the Synoptic gospels like traditional biographies and how are they different?
4. Who are the primary audiences for each of the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke and how does their audience influence their content?
5. How is the Kingdom of God defined in the Gospels? What are some of the characteristics Jesus had that defined the Kingdom of God, but that were different than what people expected from the Messiah?
6. APPLICATION—How can our lives reflect the Kingdom of God? How can we show that we serve a King who was merciful and forgiving, who came, not to condemn, but to save? Put ideas for application into very practical terms.