

# The Prophets- week 4- part 1

More individual books come under this heading than any other (16 in total)

Major (longer)- Isa, Jere, Ezek, Daniel

Minor (shorter)- final 12 of the OT

Written between 760 and 460 BC

Prophecy- def.- 'foretelling or prediction of what is to come'

Less than 2% is messianic, less than 5% describes the new-covenant age, less than 1% concerns events to come in our time... most of it was pointing forward to events that have now happened.

Main function of a Prophet was to speak to their contemporaries on behalf of God

## **4 Functions of a Prophet in Israel**

1. Called people back to the covenant- they describe the blessings and curses connected with obeying or denying God's law- especially found in Lev 26:14-39, Deut 4:15-28, and Deut 28:15-32:42
2. Their message was from God- a prophet would not take the role of a prophet without being called by God- the disagreement of Moses, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah are in part appropriate to the call God was placing on them
3. The prophets were God's ambassadors- they represented God almost as having a special position among the people
4. Their message was usually not original- much of what they say has been already expressed in Exodus, Lev, Num, and Deut- it was just being applied to the current situation they were in

## **To Understand the Prophets**

1. Use a Bible Dictionary
2. Use a Cultural Commentary
3. Get the background information- when is this written, to whom- a Bible Handbook can be helpful as it combines in a succinct way some of the features of a Bible Dictionary and a Cultural Commentary
4. Hold onto the literary context as you read
5. Read not in paragraphs, but in oracles- The books are often a collection of oracles sometimes clearly laid out, and sometimes more difficult to distinguish

## **Northern Kingdom vs. Southern Kingdom**

### Various Exiles

760BC- civil war between Israel (North) and Judah (South)

722BC- Israel falls to Assyria (superpower)

587BC- Judah falls to Babylon (superpower)

528BC- Judah returns from exile

## **Types of Oracles**

1. Covenant Lawsuit- Isaiah 3:13-26
2. The Woe- an announcement of distress, the reason for this distress, and the coming doom – Habakkuk 2:6-8
3. The Promise- looks to the future when there will be a time of blessing
4. The Enactment Prophecy- sometimes prophets would act out their message- Ezekiel was crazy like this- laid on his left side for 390 days and on his right side for 40 days- Read from Ezekiel 4
5. The Messenger Speech- ‘says the LORD’, or something similar
6. Poetry- often using parallelism so that the second line either restates, adds to, or contrasts the first line

# The Synoptic Gospels - week 4- part 2

Drawing challenge

## Synoptic Problem

Synoptic- means- “to see with or together”

Mt 3:7-10 compared to Lk 3:7-9

Look at the diagram

Mt has about 90% of Mk

Lk has over 40% of Mk

Over 600 of the 661 verses in Mk or 93% of Mk can be found in Mt and Lk

200 verses are common to Mt and Lk but not in Mk

There are various differences between all three gospels

What theories might you come up to explain these similarities and differences?

# Theories to address the Synoptic Problem

Augustinian Hypothesis- Matthew first, then Mark, then Luke drawing on all that was available... similar to idea that Mark was simply an abridgement of Matthew- largely rejected today as a theory

1. Complete Independence- the gospel writers worked independently of each and similarity is due to the Holy Spirit and shared experience- there may have been oral tradition at work here or written sources but the emphasis is on the Holy Spirit
2. The Urevangelium Theory (from German)- original source that has been lost
3. The Oral Tradition Theory- Acts 20:35
4. The Document Theory- Q (from German word for source, Quelle) would contain the approx. 200 verses common to Mt and Lk and not found in Mk- two source theory (so Mt and Lk were using Mark and Q as they wrote)
5. Four source theory- Mt and Lk wrote using... Mark, Q, M-source, and L-source

6. Composite viewpoint- their personal knowledge, oral tradition, possibly a Q, and the work of the holy spirit who would 'remind them'- John 14:26

Problems with these ideas... what happened to Q if it was so significant? What about places where Mt and Lk agree word for word while disagreeing with Mark?

### **Example- the trials of Jesus**

Look at a gospel using the verses- who was Jesus on trial in front of?

Mk 14:53, 55, 15:1

Mt 26:57, 59, 27:1-2

Lk 22:54, 22:66, 23:1, 23:6-7

John 18:12-13, 24, 28

## **The Herods**

Herod the Great – Mt 2:3, 2:15 (death)

Followed by kingdom split into three

Archelaus- Mt 2:22

Herod Antipas- put John the Baptist to death,  
Pilate sent Jesus to

Herod Philip- far north east

Followed by a united kingdom

Herod Agrippa I- killed James, put Peter in  
prison, struck down by an angel (Acts 12)

Herod Agrippa II- Paul makes a defence in front  
of in Acts 25 and 26



## Reading the gospels

1. Who is Jesus teaching? Is it the disciples, larger crowds, or people opposed to his message?
2. Look for context. Often stories are arranged to make an overarching point. For example Matthew has a collection of writings about end times, Luke 15 has three parables about lost things, etc.
3. Be aware of the many tools Jesus used to communicate- hyperbole (Mt 5:29-30), proverbs (Mt 6:21), similes and metaphors (Mt 10:16; 5:13), poetry (Mt 7:6-8; Lk 6:27-28), questions (Mt 17:25), and irony (Mt 16:2-3).
4. Be aware of the distinctive elements that each gospel writer brings to the discussion.

## **Types of Parables (often misunderstood- don't make them say more than they intend to)**

Origen described the parable of the good Samaritan allegorically as follows:

The man who was going down is Adam. Jerusalem is paradise, and Jericho is the world. The robbers are hostile powers. The priest is the Law, the Levite is the prophets, and the Samaritan is Christ. The wounds are disobedience, the beast is the Lord's body, the [inn], which accepts all who wish to enter, is the Church. ... The manager of the [inn] is the head of the Church, to whom its care has been entrusted. And the fact that the Samaritan promises he will return represents the Savior's second coming.[24]

**Parables that tell a story** (lost sheep, prodigal son, good Samaritan, great banquet, vineyard workers, rich man and Lazarus, ten virgins)

**Parables that use everyday objects to make a point** (yeast in the dough, mustard seed)

**Parables that are metaphors** ('you are the salt of the Earth')

**Parables that are Epigrams** (brief surprising statement) ('Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles?') ('the last shall be first and the first shall be last')

## **To understand a parable**

1. Find the points of reference
2. Look out for the unexpected turn
3. Put yourself in the audience and hear it as they would have. What would have surprised them?
4. Look for the main point of the parable (often it is stated)
5. Don't read into symbolism beyond the main point of the parable

Look at Luke 16:1-13- How could you misunderstand this? What is it teaching?
--

# Matthew

Authorship- Matthew the tax collector

Read Matthew 9:9-13 alongside Luke 5:27-32

Book has more references to coins than any of the other 3 gospels- including three terms for coins not found anywhere else- two-drachma tax Mt 17:24, 4 drachma coin 17:27, and talents 18:24

## Features of Matthew

1. It is written directed toward Jewish believers
2. Largest blocks of teaching- including Sermon of the Mount 5-7, commissioning of the twelve 10, parables of the kingdom 13, church life and discipline 18, and Olivet Discourse 24-25
3. Structure of the book is formed around the five discourses
4. Sometimes arranged logically instead of chronologically
5. Shows that Jesus is the messiah and includes a redefinition of God's kingdom
6. Jesus is traced back to Abraham- Mt 1:1- mentions Jesus as the son of David, the son of Abraham

# Mark

Shortest of the gospels

Considered by scholars from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries to be an abridgement of Matthew

Nearly universal testimony of the early church fathers is that Mark's gospel was written in Rome for gentile Roman Christians

1. Jewish customs are explained- 7:3-4, 14:12
2. Aramaic is translated into Greek
3. Several Latin terms are used instead of Greek equivalents
4. The Roman method of reckoning time is used- 6:48, 13:35
5. Few OT quotes or reference to fulfilled prophecy are used
6. Mark shows a concern for 'all the nations'- 5:18-20, 7:24-8:10, 11:17, 13:10, 14:9
7. The tone and message fit the persecution that Roman believers would have been experiencing

## **Characteristics of Mark**

1. Emphasizes Jesus' actions more than his teaching- 18 miracles but only 4 parables with only one major discourse
2. The writing style is vivid and forceful- very close to everyday speech in writing style- portrays the emotional extremes that people experienced
3. Jesus' wanted his identity to remain secret- demons silenced, miracles not publicized

## Luke

Luke and Acts make up about 28% of the NT-  
Luke is not mentioned by name in either book

Col 4:14 mentions 'Luke the doctor' thought to be him- also he is thought to be gentile by the nature of his writing and how he referred to in Col 4

### Gentile Character of the book

1. Explained Jesus localities- 4:31, 8:26, 21:37, 23:51, 24:13
2. Traced Jesus' genealogy all the way back to Adam- implication being that Jesus represented all of humanity
3. Referred to Roman emperors when designating Jesus' birth (2:1), and John the Baptist's preaching (3:1)
4. Used many words that would be more familiar to gentile readers than their Jewish equivalents... for example using the greek word didaskalos instead of rabbi to say teacher
5. Used the LXX when quoting from the OT- although he has few quotations (has more allusions) there are still several and they refer to the LXX

6. Little is said about Jesus fulfilling prophecies

### **Characteristics of the Book of Luke**

1. Luke focussed on the universal message of the gospel more than Mt or Mk
2. Luke writes with a more comprehensive grasp of history
3. Forgiveness is emphasized
4. Prayer is emphasised
5. Gave many examples of people coming to repentance- Zechariah, Elizabeth, Mary, Simeon, Anna, Martha, Mary, Simon, Levi, the centurion, the widow of Nain, Zacchaeus, and Joseph of Arimathea.
6. Talked about the danger of material things
7. Often spoke of the joy that comes with salvation (1:14, 8:13, 10:17, 13:17, 15:5, 9, 32, 19:6, 37)