



UNIT 3 NEW TESTAMENT

LESSON 2

MATTHEW

"The most important book of Christendom" declared Renan. The book has exerted a powerful influence throughout Christian history, particularly through its presentation of the Sermon on the Mount (Chapters 5-7).

Purpose

Writing to his fellow-Jews, the author's dominant purpose seems to be to show that the major events in the life of Jesus took place in fulfilment of prophecy; that Jesus was the long awaited Messiah-King. Jesus 'walks through Matthew's pages as if in the purple and gold of royalty' (1:1-17; 2:2; 15:22; 21:9, 15; 22:1-11; 27:11, 37, 42). Matthew has over sixty references to the Old Testament and his ever-recurring formula is "that it might be fulfilled" (1:23; 2:6, 15, 18, 23; 4:15, 16; 8:17; 12:18-21; 13:35; 21:5; 27:9). It is Matthew's primary and deliberate purpose to compel the Jews to admit that Jesus was the Messiah. Numerous titles are used of Jesus, some overlapping in meaning, to portray His Person. His very name, Jesus-Saviour (1:21). He is 'teacher' (10:24f; 23:8), 'prophet' (16:14; 10:41), 'Suffering Servant' (12:18) 'Son of Man' (8:20; 17:22; 20:18; 25:31), 'Christ' (1:1; 16:16), 'Son of David' (1:1; 21:15), 'Son of God' (4:3; 16:16), 'Lord' (about 49 times).

Characteristics

- a) The Jewish interests of the author are seen in many other respects beside the appeal to the Old Testament. We see this in reference to the attitude toward the law and fulfilment of the commandments; the Temple tax; Sabbath. Jesus is sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; his genealogy is traced from Abraham; Jewish customs and phrases are included without explanation (1:1ff; 15:18f; 6:16ff; 15:2; 17:24ff; 19:17; 23:2, 5, 23; 24:20; 25:24). Yet this "particularism" (reflecting the more restricted outlook of Jewish Christianity) is tempered somewhat by a parallel "universalism" (i.e., "belonging to all the world" 2:1ff, 13ff; 28:18ff; 23:13ff. See also 4:15; 8:10ff; 12:18, 21).
- b) The Church is mentioned in the synoptic Gospels by Matthew alone (16:18 and 18:17). The author is writing as a member of a Christian community but he also writes as a former member of the Jewish Community.
- c) The last things (eschatology) play an important role in Matthew. Chapter 24 gives a fuller account of Jesus 'apocalyptic discourse' (i.e. events of the future referred to using symbols) than any of the other Gospels. There are also a number of parables dealing with this subject, which are peculiar to Matthew (14:30; 23:36ff; 25:1-13; 31:46).



- d) Matthew is the great systematiser of the material he has collected. There is a general orderliness which caused this Gospel to be widely used for liturgical (i.e. use in worship) purposes in the early Church and down through the centuries. More than any other, Matthew is a 'teaching gospel'. In this Gospel we have five great sections of systematised teaching of Jesus to do with the Kingdom of Heaven (called 'Kingdom of God' elsewhere).

They are as follows:

1. Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5-7)
2. Mission Discourse (9:35-10:42)
3. Kingdom parables (chapter 13)
4. Greatness and forgiveness in the Kingdom (chapter 18)
5. The Coming of the King (chapters 24 and 25)

Even Matthew's numbering is very systematic (in 'threes' and 'sevens') so that his material will be easily memorised and retained by the new convert to Christianity.

Plan

Numerous outlines are given but a perfectly satisfactory outline of the whole Gospel is difficult to reconstruct.

MARK

"Among the four Gospels, that of St. Mark became my favourite from the sudden and direct manner in which it at once brings Christ into contact with a suffering world, and shows Him surrounded from morning until latest eve with the direct aspects of human distress and woe" (Dora Greenwell). Long regarded as no more than an abbreviation of Matthew and hence comparatively neglected, Mark is now commonly regarded not only as the earliest canonical Gospel but also as one of the sources used by Matthew and Luke. It is therefore a primary authority for our knowledge of the life and teaching of Jesus.

It is generally agreed that the John Mark of the Acts (and Mark of the Epistles - Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37, 39; Col. 4:10; Philemon 24; 2 Tim. 4:11 and 1 Peter 5:13) is the author of the earliest gospel; Mark being the interpreter of Peter and the author of a collection of memoirs which gave the substance of Peter's teaching (Hunter pp. 41f.).



Purpose

In his opening sentence Mark makes clear that his intention is to write a 'Gospel'; an account of the Good News about Jesus Christ; the Son of God (see also 1:14, 15; 8:35; 10:29; 13:10; 14:9). He gathered his material together that he might write a 'Gospel' with a missionary purpose in mind - a call to discipleship. Mark's written 'gospel' is composed of the fundamental elements of the 'preached gospel' (kerygma). The word "kerygma" is used for the contents of sermons which were preached in the New Testament. We are able to recover the outline of the 'preached Gospel' from Paul's letters and early sermons in Acts - see Romans 1:2f; 10:9; 1 Cor.11:23ff; 15:3ff; Acts 10:36-43.

The elements of the kerygma are:

- a. A claim that their message was the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecy (1:1-3, 7, 15).
- b. An historical exposition setting forth Jesus in His life, death, resurrection and exaltation (all conceived as one great act of God). Jesus' mighty works are carried out in the midst of demonic opposition focused first of all in the temptation incident in 1:12, 13. He comes as a Suffering Servant and his death is not unexpected - 8:31; 9:31; 10:33, 45; 14:24 - nor is His resurrection 8:31; 9:9f, 31; 10:34. The Son of Man will be seen coming in the clouds with great power 13:26; 14:62.
- c. A summons to repent and accept the forgiveness of sins in Jesus - discipleship is always the end Mark has in view (1:15-20; 8:34; 9:35; 10:28, 39, 42-45; 13:9ff.).

There were other motives Mark had for writing his Gospel, but this is seen by scholars as his main one.

Characteristics

a) Gospel of Action

There is a sense of restless urgency (1:38, 13:30, 37) as Jesus moves from one scene to another. Teaching material is at a minimum and never found in long isolated sections as in Matthew. With few preliminaries, Mark goes straight to the narration of the ministry of Jesus. There are no birth stories here. Jesus appears on the scene 'ready for action'. Mark is very fond of the word 'immediately' which he employs to join narratives one to another.

b) Candour, Realism and Vividness

The presence of a number of features in Mark, which must have been liable to offend or perplex, and some of which are omitted or modified in Matthew and/or Luke, suggests that Mark reproduced his sources with remarkable frankness: the lack of understanding by the disciples (4:13; 6:52; 8:17, 21); the attitude of Jesus' relatives, considering him mad (3:21); Jesus' inability to work mighty deeds in Nazareth (6:5, 6); the very human reactions of Jesus (1:41, 31; 3:5; 8:12, 33; 10:14, 16, 21). Shorter as a whole than either Matthew or Luke, Mark is frequently fuller and more elaborate in his descriptions and abounds in graphic detail.



When passages such as 2:1-12; 4:35-41; 5:1-20, 21-43 are compared with the corresponding passages in Matthew and Luke, the difference is noticeable. There can be little doubt that Peter was an eyewitness and he was seeing these things again with the eye of memory.

c) A Gospel for Gentiles

Mark, in contrast to Matthew, seldom quotes from the Old Testament and when he mentions Jewish customs he explains them (2:26; 7:2; 14:12; 15:42). Moreover, while he includes in his Gospel many of the Aramaic words that Jesus spoke, Mark translates them for the benefit of readers who are not Jews (5:41; 7:11, 34; 14:36; 15:22, 34). There are no fundamental discussions about the Law, as in Matthew. The disciples are not, in Mark, forbidden to go on a mission among the Samaritans or Gentiles.

d) Portrait of Jesus

Mark's is an essentially factual account of the life of Jesus. It gives a very human picture of Jesus. We see Jesus as the strong Son of God "who was manifested to destroy the works of the devil". He is the 'mighty one' (1:7cf 3:27) who returns from the testing-ground with the Gospel, 'the news of victory' (1:12f and 1:14f). Jesus launches into a victorious campaign against the foes of God (1:29ff, 34, 40ff; 1:24ff; 3:11, 22ff; 4:39; 5:2ff etc. See also 4:35ff; 6:51; 2:1ff). He also is the Servant who has come to suffer and give His life a ransom for all (8:31; 9:31; 10:33f, 39, 45), and Son of Man, a reference to His true humanity, but also undoubtedly a Messianic reference that Jesus used of Himself. One that would not have aroused in His hearers' minds the political associations which clung to other Messianic titles.

Plan

The ministry of Jesus is divided into two parts - the Galilean ministry and the journey to the Cross. The first part (chapters 1-8) begins with the baptism of Jesus, and continues with a selection of miracles. The second part (chapters 9-16) begins with Peter's confession (8:29) at Caesarea Philippi and the transfiguration and follows through to the Cross and Resurrection. The second main division falls naturally into four parts; the first division is not as easily divided. The following is Cranfield's division:

1.
 - a) The beginning 1:1-13
 - b) Beginnings of the Galilean Ministry 1:14-3:6
 - c) Later stages of the Galilean Ministry 3:7-6:13
 - d) Jesus goes outside Galilee 6:14-8:26
2.
 - a) The way to Jerusalem 8:27-10:52
 - b) Ministry to Jerusalem 11:1-13:37
 - c) The Passion 14:1-15:44
 - d) The Resurrection 16:1-8



Question 1

Read Matthew chapter 13. Choose 5 things about the Kingdom of Heaven which are explained in this chapter and write them down.

Question 2

What do you think was Matthew's main purpose in writing his Gospel? Use Bible references to explain your answer.

Question 3

Who wrote the Gospel of Mark and what else do we know about him? How did he probably come to know all the facts he wrote about?

Question 4

What is meant by "kerygma"? Briefly summarise the 3 elements of the kerygma.

Question 5

How do we know Mark wrote mainly for Gentiles (give examples from the Bible)?

QUESTION FOR GROUP STUDY

Find some examples in Mark of the features which might offend or perplex. Why do you think Mark included them? What is your personal reaction to them?