

Humanities 2

Lecture 7

The Gospels of Mark of Luke

REVIEW from last class:

- The origins of Christianity: religion as a set of beliefs rather than a set of practices
- the figure of Jesus as unique
- the appropriation of a Platonic theory of knowledge and mind
- miracles vs. magic

Narrative and the making of religion: nation and narration (Virgil); faith and narration (Gospels);

MARK:

- earliest of the Gospels
- emphasizes the oral teaching of Jesus
- simple, direct PARATACTIC style
- Jesus as messianic holy man; miracle-worker, not magician
- focus on the maturity and end, rather than the beginning, of Jesus' life
- the Last Supper
- the imagery of healing, cleansing, water, the voice, the wilderness
- opening quotation from Isaiah and the establishment of the prophetic voice

LUKE

uses Mark as a source

emphasis on the literary narrative and the force of LUKE himself as
authoritative narrator

complex, highly-developed literary style

the first sentence:

HYPOTAXIS

Emphasis on genealogy: Jesus as a descendant of Adam; the narratives of the
foretelling of and early life of Jesus; emphasis on women; the role of the
family as a source of identity

Miracles and Parables: Luke has more than any other Gospel
20 miracles, 6 unique to Luke; 18 unique parables

New emphasis on Last Supper as the basis for the liturgy

The crucifixion and the post-resurrection appearances; the road to Emmaus

LUKE AS A LITERARY WRITER RATHER THAN AS AN ORAL STORYTELLER
THE GOSPEL OF LUKE AS A TEXT TO BE READ; DEVELOPS LITERARY
CHARACTERS AND MOTIVES; SUBPLOTS; DIALOGUE; REVISION OF
PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATING MATERIAL.

SPECIFIC PASSAGES AND EPISODES IN LUKE

Chapters 1-3:

The opening sentence; establishment of a narrative voice and a named addressee;

birth and genealogy of John the Baptist;

birth and genealogy of Jesus

PURPOSES: to trace John's and Jesus' lineage along with the lineage of his own narrative, to place Christian narrative and doctrine in a linear context

to trace Jesus' lineage back to Adam, Abraham, and David to show Jesus as the fulfillment of a sacred history leading to salvation

to locate the annunciation in the space of women's domestic life

emphasis on writing: e.g., 1:63 "and he asked for a writing table, and wrote saying his name is John. And they marveled all"

to tell the story of the annunciation and the birth of Jesus as a way of providing readers with a calendrically-based, narrative of sacrality: i.e., the creation of the cycle of the year as holy and sacred

Mark: Christianity as, in essence, a story of the wilderness and the rural world;
non-linear narrative; feeling of dream; lack of causality

Luke: Christianity as, in essence, a story of the family and its places of dwelling;
a story of institutions; linear, focused narrative; feeling of history; emphasis
on causality and literary character and motive; establishment of key stories
and events in Jesus' life as sites for sacred allegory and remembrance

The Last Supper: the transformation of ritual into liturgy

Luke 22

The Last Supper was the Passover Seder

The Jewish tradition of Passover recalls the Exodus from Egypt, the liberation of the Jewish people from enslavement in Egypt, and the redemptive power of belief.

The heart of the Seder is the ritual set of foods, each of which symbolizes
SOMETHING FROM THE PAST:

Matzo: the unleavened bread

Bitter Herbs and salt water: tears and sorrow

Charoset: mortar of the buildings

the egg: renewal

the lamb shank: the marking of the Jewish homes with the blood
of a sacrificed lamb

Jesus transforms the Passover foods INTO SOMETHING MEANINGFUL FOR
THE FUTURE; this is my body, this is my blood.

The purpose of the Last Supper is to mark the transition to a new spiritual interpretation of ritual and to move from observance to practice to faith itself.

Mark: central image of the human body is the mouth: oral, voice

Luke: central image of the human body is the hand: writing

Jesus as a literate reader in Luke: 4:16-17 (this is unique to Luke):

Jesus in the synagogue “stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book . . .” Jesus as a reader

Compare 10:25-37: the story of the Good Samaritan: this is a story that hinges on reading the written text; social literacy becomes spiritual literacy; the story is unique to Luke

The Good Samaritan

begins with a lawyer

What is written in the law? How readest thou?

Quotation from Old Testament texts: Deuteronomy and Leviticus

Then: the interpretation: “who is my neighbor?”

Jesus interprets text through parable: “a certain man . . .”

Man fell among thieves; three men pass him: a priest; a Levite; a Samaritan

The Samaritan helps him

The Samaritan is the neighbor

Redefinition of “neighbor” as someone who acts in a certain way, rather than someone who lives nearby.

“go and do thou likewise” : the goal of the parable is to change everyday behavior

Unique to Luke, too, is the visit to Martha and Mary, 10:38-42:

Christianity as a tale of village, domestic life; not as a tale of wilderness
rural life; the heart of Christianity as the house; domestic activity
as a core value

The goal of the story is to illustrate something about Jesus’s personality

The Prodigal Son 15:11-33

Unique to Luke: a story of fathers and sons; an allegorical story of forgiveness a social story of the relationship of the country to the city; the return of the lost son as an occasion for rejoicing; allegorical foreshadowing of the resurrection ('for this my son was dead, and is alive again' 24); the jealousy of the son who stayed behind; NOW, an allegorical retelling of Cain and Abel; two sons fighting for the benevolence of the father; but here, the result is not murder and exile, but forgiveness and explanation; the father restores the domestic balance in the family. The goal of the parable is to offer not so much a lesson in behavior as a lesson in faith.

Many of the parables and stories in Luke are thus tales of domestic harmony;
They define Christianity as a religion of the house and the family
They offer human narratives that parallel the divine narrative of father and son
They contrast with the Roman mythological narratives of genealogy and parenthood in the Aeneid (Venus and Aeneas; Aeneas and Anchises; Daedalus and Icarus).

The Last Supper: Luke develops the story of the Last Supper as an re-allegorization of the Passover Seder. What makes Luke different, and what aligns him with the teachings of St. Paul, is the idea that: the Last Supper provides a liturgy to be repeated by Jesus' followers: in other words, it's not just a story; it's a script for ritual repetition; the basis of what would become the Mass.

The Revelation at Emmaus

Luke 24:13-35 develops what are only two sentences in Mark (16:12-13)

The purpose of the story of the walk to Emmaus

Named place; creation of literary realism

Named character (Cleopas)

Cleopas gets to RETELL THE STORY OF THE CRUCIFIXION AND
RESURRECTION TO JESUS HIMSELF!

The occasion for retelling the story of the appearance again (35)

KEY POINT: this is a parable about retelling the story of Jesus; it provides
a model not for living day to day but for believing spiritually

THUS: PARABLES IN LUKE HAVE A MULTIPLE PURPOSE

TO ILLUSTRATE HOW TO BEHAVE IN EVERYDAY LIFE

TO TO TEACH MORAL VIRTUES

TO OFFER ALLEGORIES OF SALVATION

TO TEACH HOW TO BELIEVE AND HOW TO AFFIRM THAT BELIEF IN STORY

Luke vs. Mark at the end: Mark 16: 14-18, Jesus appears and says “Go ye into the world and preach the Gospel”

Luke 24:36-49: Jesus appears and states that his words fulfilled those that were “written in the law of Moses . . .”; “Then opened he their understanding that they might understand the scriptures Thus it is written”

LOOKING AHEAD TO THURSDAY: ROMANS AND FIRST CORINTHIANS
GOSPEL AND EPISTLE; THE GOSPEL WRITERS AND ST. PAUL

St. Paul's own biography as presented in the Book of Acts: Paul as a figure
in a kind of parable of salvation

Revelation on the Road to Damascus: Saul becomes Paul; renaming as an act
of conversion; the road between cities

St. Paul's own writings as designed to codify and explain the way of reading
ALLEGORICALLY

WE SEE THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

St. Paul's way of reading: understanding Resurrection; understanding the Psalms

Christian Doctrine as a process of reading the Old Testament

St. Paul as establishing his own authority as a teacher through the Epistles

THE GOSPELS TELL STORIES; PAUL CODIFIES STORIES INTO DOCTRINE;
HIS GOAL IS TO CREATE NOT A CANON OF STORIES BUT A CANON OF
BELIEFS. REDEFINITION OF LOVE AS FAITH/FAITH AS LOVE. DUTY IS DESIRE