



Gospels & Acts

Reading the Bible Again for the First Time

The Bible as Sacrament

- The lens through which we may experience the living, breathing, active, present God - believing in God rather than believing in the lens.

"To be Christian is to live within the Christian tradition as a sacrament and let it do its transforming work within and among us."

The Creation Stories

- God created the heavens and the earth —
Historical origination or ontological dependence?

“God is the source of everything that is
in every moment of time.”

- God’s creation & creativity continue to invite relationship and
connection and care, and are grounded in the sacred

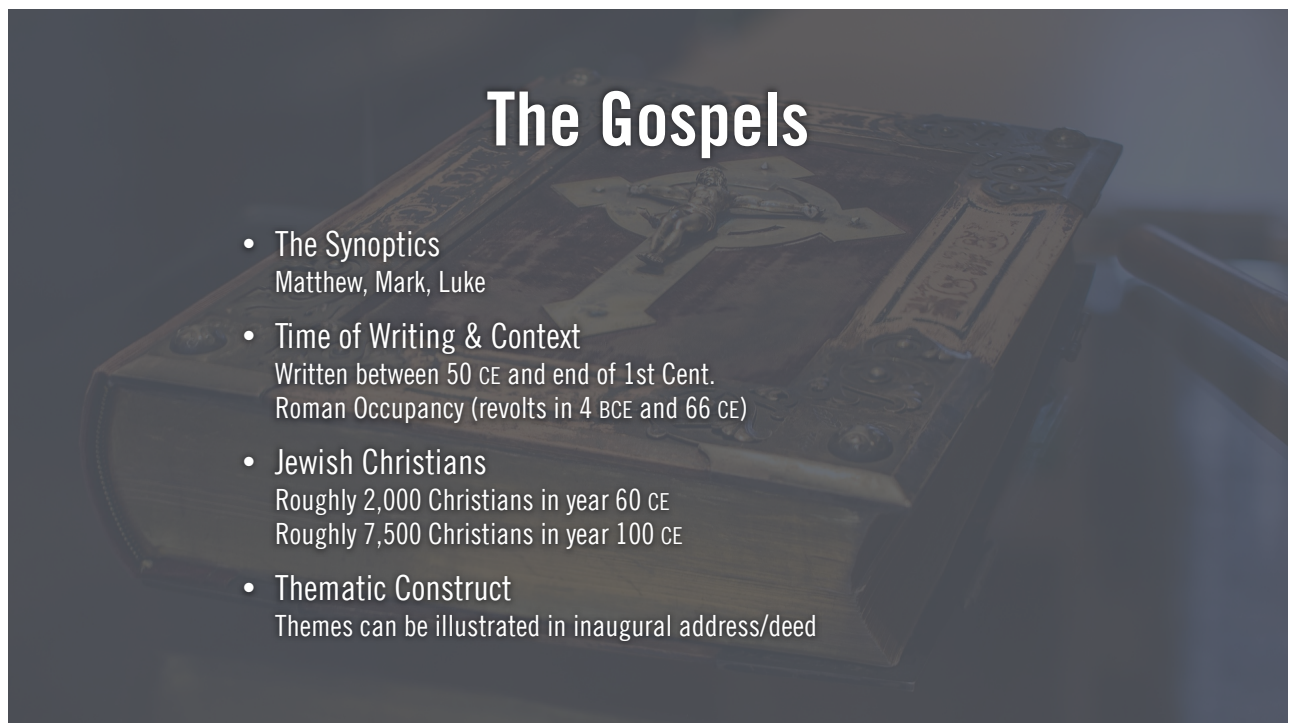
The Hebrew Bible

- The Pentateuch
Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
- The Prophets
Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Lamentations, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel,
and the minor prophets
- Israel’s Wisdom
Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel,
Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles



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The Gospels

- The Synoptics
Matthew, Mark, Luke
- Time of Writing & Context
Written between 50 CE and end of 1st Cent.
Roman Occupancy (revolts in 4 BCE and 66 CE)
- Jewish Christians
Roughly 2,000 Christians in year 60 CE
Roughly 7,500 Christians in year 100 CE
- Thematic Construct
Themes can be illustrated in inaugural address/deed



Mark

- Written around 70 CE
Around the same time as the Temple was destroyed
- Apocalyptic Eschatology
Mark 13 – “the little apocalypse”
Soon – “this generation won’t pass away until all these things happen” (v. 30)
- Inaugural Scene
Jesus says, “Now is the time! Here comes God’s kingdom! Change your hearts and lives, and trust this good news!” (Mark 1:15)



Mark

- The Way
Path or road – the “way” is the path of death and resurrection
Jesus calls his followers to the way of the cross, the path of death and resurrection

Matthew



- **Written 10-20 years later than Mark**
Audience likely late-first-century community of Christian Jews in conflict with more traditional Jews
- **Both Complimentary & Hostile to Judaism**
Criticism of scribes/Pharisees is amplified;
Some accounts/parables include added verses critical of Jewish leaders;
Blame for Jesus' crucifixion pointed to Jewish crowd;
Quotes Hebrew Bible more than other Gospel authors;
Traces genealogy to Abraham;
Affirms Jewish law (Matthew 5:17-18)

Matthew



- **Mosaic Parallel**
Five sections (like Torah), each ending with "When Jesus had finished saying these things..." (7:28, 11:1, 13:53, 19:1, 26:1)
Birth narrative like Moses' (slaughter of innocents)
- **Inaugural Scene**
Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)
Jesus on the mountain like Moses on Sinai
This gospel functions like the Pentateuch
Traditions of Israel belonged to early Christians, not to "scribes and Pharisees"


Luke-Acts

- Written 10-20 years later than Mark
Luke narrates Jesus' mission to Jews in Jerusalem; Acts narrates spread of Christianity beyond Jerusalem
- Luke
Begins and ends in Jerusalem
- Acts
Begins in Jerusalem and ends in Rome
- Luke-Acts
The journey of God's promise from the community of Jerusalem to the entire world

Luke-Acts

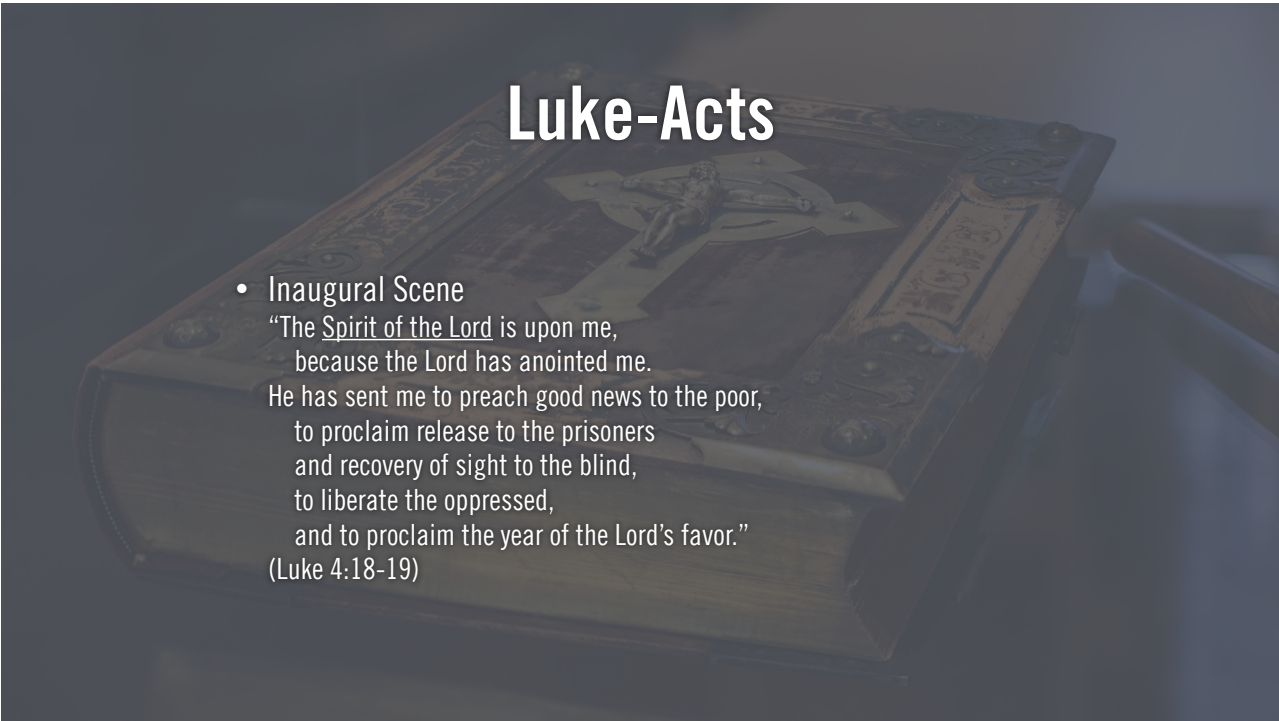
- Inaugural Scene
"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me.
He has sent me to preach good news to the poor,
to proclaim release to the prisoners
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to liberate the oppressed,
and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."
(Luke 4:18-19)

Luke-Acts



- The Holy Spirit in Luke
Conception; Elizabeth & Zechariah; Simeon; Jesus' baptism; pre- and post-temptation; "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."
- The Holy Spirit in Acts
Pentecost; Ethiopian eunuch; Paul's conversion; Peter & Cornelius; Paul taking Gospel to Europe

Luke-Acts



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John

- Written 30-40 years later than Mark
Closely related in style & content to Johannine epistles and Revelation
- Differs in significant ways from the Synoptics
Chronology; Geography; Jesus' message; Style of Jesus' teaching



John

- Inaugural Scene
Wedding scene at Cana in Galilee (John 2:1-12)
John describes as a sign (John 2:11)
- Signs of Significance
Water was for Jewish rites of purification
Wedding language used in Judaism as symbol for Messianic age; also as metaphor for relationship between God and Israel
Symbol of the intimacy of the divine-human connection and the coming together of heaven and earth



The Gospels

- Extraordinary Jesus
 - One with God
 - Revelation of God
 - “The Way”
 - Bread of life
 - Light shining in darkness
 - Lifts us out of death into life
- The Gospels
 - Christianity’s primal narratives



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