

New Testament Backgrounds

Class 1 Notes

Chad Harrington

Centrality of Christ

- “What is the most significant thing for the ongoing ministry of the church that Jesus did between his resurrection and ascension?” – Fred Long
 - His preaching of the kingdom?
 - His resurrection appearances?
 - The great commission?
 - *He opened the disciples minds to understand the Scriptures* – Fred Long thinks this is the answer. From Luke 24:45—he opened their minds: “Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.” He’s introducing a Christocentric hermeneutic by relating those scriptures to himself.

OT Background

- Genesis 49:10: “The scepter will not depart from Judah, // nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, // until he comes to whom it belongs // and the obedience of the nations is his.”
- Numbers 24:17
 - “Num 24:17 “I see him, but not now; // I behold him, but not near. // A star will come out of Jacob; // a scepter will rise out of Israel. // He will crush the foreheads of Moab, // the skulls of all the sons of Sheth.”
 - Simon ben Kosiba was nick named bar kokhba after this passage (“son of the star”)
- Isaiah 11:1-6: “Isa 11:1–6 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; // from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. 2 // The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him— // the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, // the Spirit of counsel and of power, // the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD— 3 // and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. // He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, // or decide by what he hears with his ears; 4 // but with righteousness he will judge the needy, // with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. // He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; // with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. 5 // Righteousness will be his belt // and faithfulness the sash around his waist. 6 // The wolf will live with the lamb, // the leopard will lie down with the goat, // the calf and the lion and the yearling together; // and a little child will lead them.”
- Mark 1 || Isaiah 42

- Mark 1:11: "And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."
- Isa 42:1: "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, // my chosen one in whom I delight; // I will put my Spirit on him // and he will bring justice to the nations."
- Melchizedek's appearance in 11QMelch 2:5-9, 13, 25 is linked to Isaiah 61:1, 2

NT Canonical Context

- The Canon in three main parts:
 - Gospels (Acts is part two of Luke)
 - Pauline Epistles
 - General Epistles (Plus, Revelation)
- Formation: General (apologetics covers more)
 - Gospels. Notes from H. Gamble in *Dictionary of New Testament Backgrounds*.
 - Justin Martyr knew and appreciated the Gospels; "he was active in Rome near the middle of the second century." He calls the Gospels "memoirs" of the apostles and those who followed them (Justin Martyr Apol. 1 66.3; 67.3; Dial. Tryph. 100.4; 101.3; etc.).
 - Tatian (A.D. 170) wrote the Diatessaron, which was a conflation of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John (also drawing on additional material). This work "gained broad popularity." His purpose was to create one coherent gospel instead of many. This shows the 1). Desire for a coherent message and 2). The fluidity of the gospels early on. They could still be added to.
 - "The first witness to such a collection is Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons in Gaul (c. A.D. 180). He sharply criticized Christian groups that made use of only one Gospel (Irenaeus Haer. 3.11.7) and insisted, with the aid of elaborate allegorical warrants, that there could be neither more nor fewer than four Gospels, namely, John Luke, Matthew and Mark (Irenaeus Haer. 3.11.8-9). Irenaeus speaks of the gospel as given "under four aspects" that are mutually complementary, or as having a "fourfold form."
 - Pauline Corpus (13)
 - "The first witness to a full-blown edition of the Pauline corpus is Marcion, about A.D. 140." It had 10 letters (no Hebrews). They were in decreasing order. "It has become increasingly clear, however, that Marcion's Pauline corpus was textually and structurally derivative from another (Frede; Dahl; Clabeaux)."
 - General Epistles.
 - 1 and 2 Peter, James, Jude and 1, 2 and 3 John. Formed as a collect in the late third century.
 - Formation of the canon as such.

- Eusebius is the first to write about a canon in Hist. Eccl. 3.25.1-7 during the first quarter of the fourth century. He had three categories: acknowledged books, disputed books and heretical books (189).
- **Athanasius is the first to give a list exactly like ours with 27 books. He was the bishop of Alexandria and in his Thirty-ninth Festal (Easter) Letter issued in A.D.367 he put the canon list we have today (190).**
- Canonization:
 - The canonization of the NT aimed to “Exclude rather than to include” (192).
 - The criterion used to “exclude” certain writings into a complete codex (193):
 1. Traditional use—used in the churches and quoted from early on
 2. Apostolicity—associated to an apostle
 3. Catholicity—relevant for the church as a whole, not just one individual
 4. Orthodoxy—adhered to the faith and practices of the church

Important NT Dates:

1. Birth of John and Jesus: 6-4 BC
 2. Ministry of Jesus AD 29-33
 3. Pentecost: AD 33
 4. Conversion and Ministry of Paul and others: AD 33-67
 5. Fall of the Second Temple: AD 70
- Jesus birth, beginning of his ministry, death, duration of his ministry and death (IVP, “Chronology, New Testament”)
 - Jesus’ Birth. Jesus was most likely born on or before April 4 B.C. because of Herod’s death in 4 B.C., the census and the visit of the magi point to that direction (201-3).
 - Beginning of ministry. The word used for Jesus’ age being about thirty “hosei” means approximately. Doing the math, it was probably about A.D. 28 when he was about 31 years old (203).
 - Duration of ministry. Many early church fathers commonly said it was one year. But it seems likely that we should go with the historical account that John provides for a three to four year ministry due to the Passover mentionings (203, 4).
 - Jesus’ Death. Both the day and year are controversial. The Synoptic gospels show Jesus eating on a Thursday, dying on a Friday. The only dates on which Passover (the day of his death) would have been on a Friday, Nisan 14, are A.D. 30 and A.D. 33. Depending on the length of his ministry, Jesus died on either of those years (204).
 - First book to last: 40s to 95 AD

- James: 40s
- Pauline letters: 40s to 67 (Galatians first in 40s; Pastoral Epistles last in 60s)
- Synoptic Gospels: Mark as early as 40s; traditionally 60s
- 1-3 John: 80s-90s
- John: 90s