

Jesus and the Rise of Christianity: Sources, traditions, problems

March 2, 2006

- Sources for the life of Jesus: Canonical gospels and other material
- Our dual project: life of Jesus **and** Jesus as proclaimed by ancient Christians
- Historicity and biography: methods and problems

Sources for the life of Jesus: Canonical gospels and other material

- Canonical gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
- Josephus, so-called *Testimonium Flavianum*
May be a later Christian interpolation
- Non-canonical Gospels
May reflect early traditions, but frequently later texts
- Ultimately: almost entirely dependent upon canonical gospels

Our dual project ...

- Life of Jesus
 - Biography of a Palestinian holy man
 - Internal and external politics of a Roman province leading to crucifixion
- and**
- Development of the image of Jesus as proclaimed by ancient Christians
 - Jewish messiah or prophet
 - pre-existing divine *Logos* (Word)



Historicity and biography: methods and problems

- Problem of text and transmission
- “Synoptic Problem”
- “Q” hypothesis (four-source hypothesis)
- Criteria of historicity



Problem of text and transmission

- Text is transmitted by manuscript, and difference arise, **e.g.**,
 1. Gerasa, Gadara (Mk 5:1, and parallels)
 2. “Forgive them Father, they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34). Some mss include others do not
 3. Ending of Mark: some very old mss. end with 16:8; others longer endings.
- Differences such as nos. 2 and 3 above:
 - religious implications
 - significant for development of **image** of Jesus



“Synoptic problem”

- “Synopsis” a “seeing together”
- Synoptic gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke:
The outline (and wording!) of the story can be arranged in parallel columns
- Synoptic **problem**: which is **first**, what is the **relationship** between them?
 - Broad consensus: Markan priority: Mark is prior, Matthew and Luke used Mark
 - Common (not universal) view: Q-hypothesis

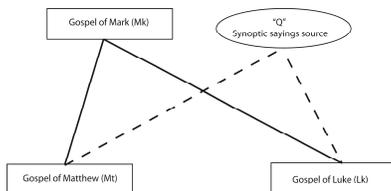
“Synoptic Problem”: Gospel of John by contrast

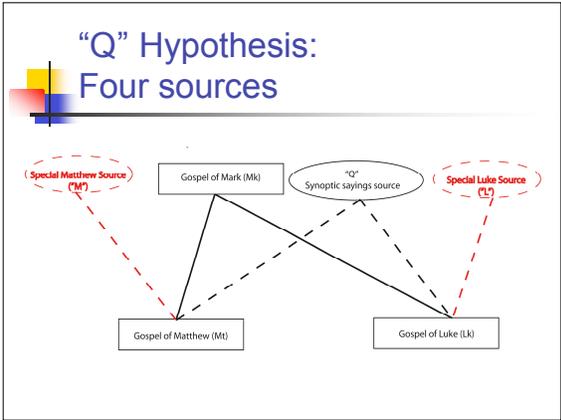
- John uses different chronology:
 - Jn: Several visits to Jerusalem; Synoptics one culminating visit
 - Tables of the moneychangers in Jn 2:13ff; in Jesus’ final week in Synoptics (Mk. 11:15ff.)
- John also has different stories (e.g., Lazarus, Water into wine)

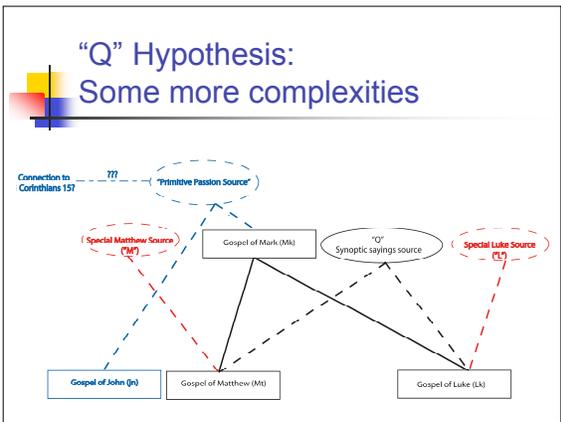
“Q” hypothesis: Four-source hypothesis

- Matthew and Luke used Mark
- Material common to Matthew and Luke derives from a common source (“Q”)
- Matthew and Luke each had sources special to them (e.g., nativity, infancy)

“Q” Hypothesis: Use of Mark and Q







- ### Criteria of historicity
- The problem: multiple sources, disagreements, faithful embellishments.
How much goes back to Jesus?
 - Criteria of historicity: what *might* be historical? (**3 examples**)
 - Multiple attestation (e.g. Eucharist, 1 Cor. and Paul)
 - Embarrassment (e.g., baptism by John)
 - "Dual dissimilarity" (e.g., Jesus' non-fasting)
