Gospels and Communities: Mark and John

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- Terminology and Definitions
- Geography of the Gospels
- Outline of common Gospel account
- Special Themes in Mark and John

Terminology and Definitions

- Christology: understanding of role of Christ. At the extremes
  - High Christology: Christ = God
  - Low Christology: Christ, a (very special) man
- “Son of Man”
  - A figure of the heavenly court, whose rule will be established in the end of days (Daniel 7; 1 Enoch)
  - Jesus refers to in the third person
- Logos ("Word")
  - A Greek philosophical word
    - Stoics, the active principle that permeates and enables reality
    - Philo (Jewish philosopher, Alexandria 1CE), stoic themes, +
    - Idea of logos as divine artist (Platonic demiurgos)

Geography of the Gospels

- Galilee (upper, lower)
- Territories of Sidon and Tyre
- Judaea
- “The other side” (Peraea)
- Samaria
- Jerusalem
Outline of common Gospel account

- Baptism by John B.
- Teaching and miracles in Galilee and environs
- Selection of disciples
- “Messianic” entry into Jerusalem (“Palm Sunday”)
- Arrest, interrogation by High Priests etc.
- Trial by Pontius Pilate
- Peter’s denial (scattering of disciples)
- Crucifixion

Special Themes in Mark

- [Unlike John: Chronology could take place in one year]
- Christology: some tensions
- Opponents
- Theme of Secrecy
- Failure of the disciples
Mark’s Christology: some tensions

- Son of God. Not necessarily "theological"
- Use: demons, centurion; possibly HP, 14:6.
- Metaphor of special relationship
- Adoption of David as a son (Ps. 2; 2 Sam 7:14)
- Son of Man
  - Jesus refers to in the third person (not "I")
  - Hypothetically: underlying tradition of Jesus as prophet of Son of Man, later identified with risen Christ?
- Christ, "son of David"
  [NB argument: Christ is not the son of David, Ch. 12]
- "Adoption" of Jesus?

Opponents in Mark

- Pharisees (but absent in Passion)
- High Priests (but absent in earlier portions)
- Scribes

Theme of Secrecy in Mark

- "Tell no one." E.g. 12:27–31
  "Who do men say I am?"
- Parables. E.g., 4:11–13
  And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables; so that they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand; lest they should turn again, and be forgiven." And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?"
Failure of the disciples in Mark

- Failure to understand parables (4:11–13)
- Failure to keep watch at Gethsemane (14:37–41). Remember the eschatological significance of watchfulness and wakefulness.
- End of the Gospel: “So they went out and fled from the tomb ... for they were very afraid”

Special Themes in John

- [Unlike Mark: From references to festivals, must take place over at least a few years]
- “Beloved Disciple”: Politics of discipleship in later communities?
- Christology
- Among the opponents: “The Jews”

“Beloved Disciple”: Politics of discipleship in later communities?

- Authority for the Gospel itself, but at some remove (e.g., conclusion)
- Legend of survival to the end? (Legacy: Prester John)
- Supplanting Peter?
  - Disciple is the one to witness passion, first to the tomb
  - Peter chafes: “Lord what about him?” (21:21)
John’s Christology

- Pre-existent Logos (Word)
  - Roots: Proverbs 8 (Wisdom); cf. Philo
  - Motifs: light, truth, “from above”
- Hearers as “elect”
  - “But to all who received him he gave power to be children of God” (1:12)
  - “It is because you [Jews] cannot accept my word. You are from your father the devil…”
- Also tensions (as in Mark): repeatedly identified as “prophet”

Among the opponents: “The Jews”

- The problem: Were not most of Jesus’ interaction with Jews, including followers and hearers?
- Possibly (i): Marks the distance of Gospel’s Christian community from Jews
  - A fully “gentile” community?
  - A “Jewish” community smarting over expulsion?
- Possibly (ii): Judaeans vs. Galileans, Samaritans, etc.
- Legacy: Contribution to Christian antisemitism