The Study of Jesus' Life

Source Criticism of the Gospels

Synoptic - from two Greek words meaning "seeing together" (syn = together) and οψις (opsis = seeing) to indicate that the contents of these three Gospels can be viewed side-by-side

Why are the first three synoptic gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke - alike?

- Oral form of tradition

- The synoptic gospels often recount the same stories about Jesus, though sometimes with different and more or less detail, but mostly following the same sequence and to a large extent using the same words.
- The synoptic problem concerns how this interrelation came to pass and what the nature of this interrelationship is. Any solution must account for the similarities and differences in content, order, and wording. Possible answers speculate either a direct relationship (one Evangelist possessed one of the gospels) or indirect (two Evangelists having access to a shared source).

Synoptic Setup

Most Protestant and some Roman Catholic scholars agree that Matthew and Luke were written later than Mark, which they followed closely.

- Matthew then divided Mark into five portions and used them in order, separating them by other material.
- Luke divided the book only in two, nine chapters being inserted between.
- Mark however, only accounts for half of the other two Gospels.
- Matthew and Luke each have about 100 verses in common, most of them sayings like the Beatitudes.

The Theology of Judaism

The Old Testament emphasized the fate of Israel, God's chosen nation and covenant builder.

Messianic Hope – Jews looked for God to use a purely human figure to bring military deliverance from Roman domination; or introduce the Messiah as ruler

- Jews did not expect the Messiah to be a divine as well as human being, or to suffer, die, and rise from the dead for their salvation from sin. (Read pg. 86)
  - "*The present age*" - evil in character...utopian "*days of the Messiah - Day of the Lord*"...afterwards "*the coming age*"- the eternal future

Jewish Education

- Jewish children received their first lessons in Hebrew history and religion, practical skills, and reading and writing from their parents.
  - Mosaic law and Proverbs in the Old Testament contain these injunctions about this parent responsibility. (Prov. 1:8; 6:20; 31:1)
  - Tutors were reserved for wealthy families (King Ahab – 2 Kings 10:1,5)
  - *Rebellion against one's parents is direct rebellion against God.* The 5th Command is to honor one's father and mother (Exodus 20:12). Parents are a God-ordained authority. Disobedience to parents is disobedience to God (Ephesians 6:1-3). Throughout the Bible, there are only a handful of things we are told to fear: God (Proverbs 1:7) and parents (Leviticus 19:3) are among them. (*Knowing God* by J.I. Packer)

Jesus Public Ministry

- Ministry lasted about 3 ½ years (A.D. 30-33, or A.D. 27-30)
- John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus
    - Preaching, teaching, performing miracles and exorcisms, dieing sacrificially for our sins, rising from the dead for our eternal life; all to serve in bringing God's kingdom to earth
- Jesus ministry succeeded among the his disciples, the kingdom has been realized
    - To the extent that the rest of the world remains in rebellion against God, his kingdom has yet to come.
    - The tension between the already and the not yet makes up the mystery of the kingdom as portrayed in parables.

Main Events in Jesus' Public Ministry

Year of Obscurity	Year of Popularity	Year of Rejection
- Baptism - Temptation - Preaching and teaching - Miracle-working and exorcisms	- Large crowds - Choice of the Twelve - More preaching and teaching - More miracle-working and exorcisms	- Peter's confession of Jesus' messiahship - Prediction of passion and resurrection - Transfiguration - Raising of Lazarus - Passion Week - Triumph entry - Temple cleansing - Last Supper - Arrest and trials - Crucifixion - Resurrection - Post-resurrection appearances (1 Cor 15:5-8) - Ascension