



**WELCOME**

PALESTINE IN CHRIST'S TIME

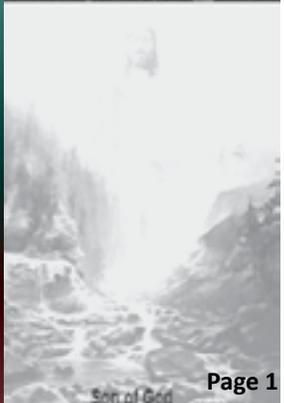
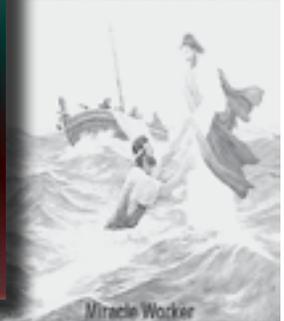
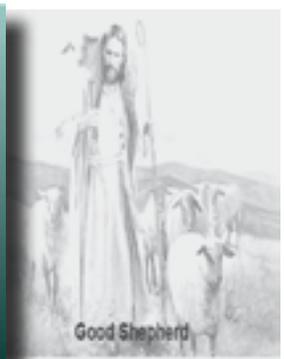
**THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF CHRIST**

Session Three

**INTERLAKEN 2013**

Led by

**Dr. Lorin L. Cranford**



WELCOME to this third session of our study of the life of Christ. Already we have taken a look at how to put the story of Jesus together, and then His beginnings as recorded in the canonical gospels. Today our challenge is rather large: **how did Jesus do ministry?** Many different ways of approaching such a topic are possible. What I would like to do is to blend together a chronological and a methodological perspective. Our western minds are deeply conditioned to think of time progression when considering the life of some person. Although the data for analyzing a chronological progression of Jesus' public ministry is somewhat limited, enough does exist inside the canonical gospels in order to paint a fairly detailed portrait of Jesus as teacher, miracle worker, preacher etc., as He ministered to folks in Palestine for somewhat over three years of time from 27 to 30 AD.

But also helpful is to explore the approach to doing ministry. Jesus taught, He preached, He healed etc. How did He go about doing those things? What can we learn today from His approach to ministry? These are important concerns for our study.

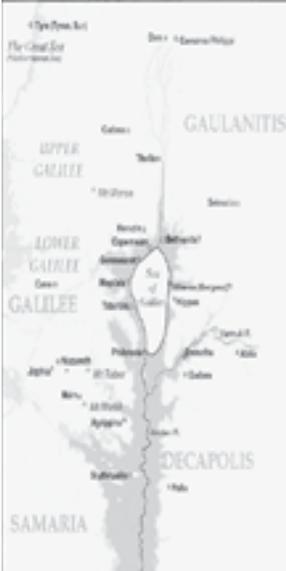
**THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF CHRIST**

**DAY THREE: PUBLIC MINISTRY**

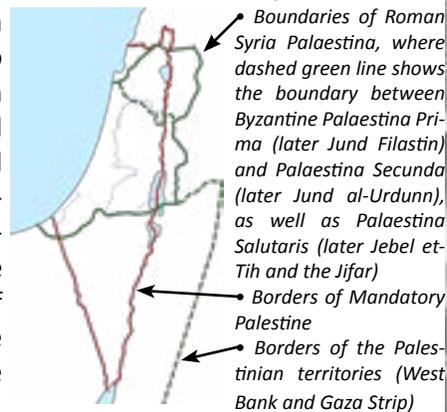
**STUDY OVERVIEW**

- > **DAY ONE: How to get the story**
- > **DAY TWO: Beginnings**
- > **DAY THREE: Ministry to the people**
- > **DAY FOUR: Teaching the Kingdom**
- > **DAY FIVE: Savior & Lord**

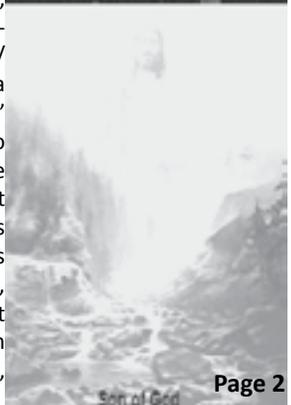
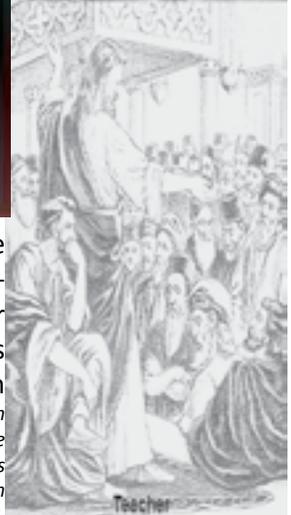
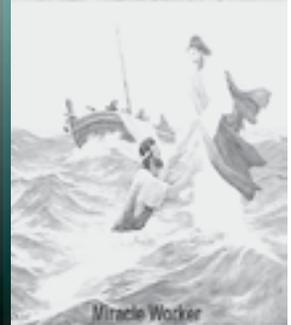
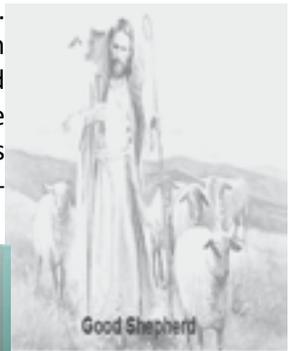
But first a quick overview so we know where we are in this study. Day three is our focus on Jesus' public ministry. Day one was introduction and exploring approaches to studying the life of Christ. Day two focused yesterday on first the Infancy Narratives of Matthew and Luke, with some insights from the apocryphal Infancy Gospels. Then major attention was given to Jesus launching public ministry. In the synoptic gospels this centers on His baptism and temptation in the Judean wilderness.



We pick up the story today with ministry taking place in Galilee. The geography of Jesus' public ministry covers ancient Palestine.<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of the Roman empire after the middle east was brought under its control, Palestine was divided into three basic governmental districts or provinces: Galilee in the north; Samaria in the middle, and Judea in the south. The Mediterranean Sea formed the western boundary to all three regions. On the eastern side the Sea of Galilee southward along to Jordan River to the Dead Sea formed the approximate eastern boundary for all three provinces. One would want to note the very fluid nature of the borders of the Roman provinces, as well as the shifting borders down through the



<sup>1</sup>"Palestine in the ancient world was part of the region known as Canaan and, later, the region where the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah were located. Palestine is a designation of an area of land, which the Philistines occupied a very small part of (the Canaanites/Phoenicians and the Israelites, among others, having established themselves in the area much earlier). The name 'Palestine' is thought to derive from either the word "plesheth" (meaning 'root palash', an edible concoction carried by migratory tribes which came to symbolize nomadic peoples) or as a Greek designation for the nomadic Philistines. The author Tom Robbins, and others, have suggested the name originates from the ancient androgynous god Pales who was widely worshiped in the region known as Palestine. If this is so then the name of the region means 'Land of Pales'. That there was an androgynous god with the head of a donkey who was popularly recognized as Pales by the Canaanites, Israelites and Philistines is known but there exists no firm documentation from ancient times linking the god to the name of the region and, most likely, the name derives from the Greek for 'the Land of the Philistines'. " ["Palestine," *Ancient Encyclopedia of History*, online]





centuries due to warfare etc.<sup>2</sup>

This is not a large area in size. From the northern region of Galilee (see intersection B1 on map) to the south level to the southern end of the Dead Sea is only appx. 425 km (264 miles). Its width ranges from 114 km (71 mi) at its widest point to 15 km (9.3 mi) at its narrowest point. This gives a total land mass of appx. 27,500 km<sup>2</sup> (10,425 sq. mi).<sup>3</sup> Yet despite this very small amount of land mass, human history has assigned extraordinary significance to this region. This in

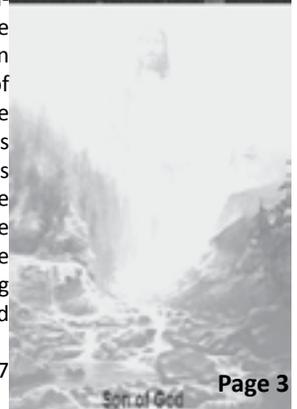
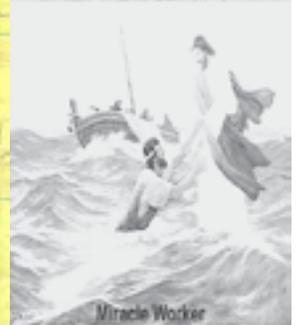


large part is due to the area being 'home base' for three of the world's major religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Yet the Roman world of Jesus' day did not consider this region to be significant for anything other than military strategy for protecting their sources of grain etc. shipped from Egypt to Rome to feed the masses of the people. They were keenly aware of the centuries old tendency of the middle east toward chaos and perpetual conflict.

Jesus' entire earthly life centered around this region. He was born in Bethlehem (Judea), grew up in Nazareth (Galilee), and spent his entire life traveling back and forth between Galilee and Judea. He never traveled over two hundred kilometers from where he was born!

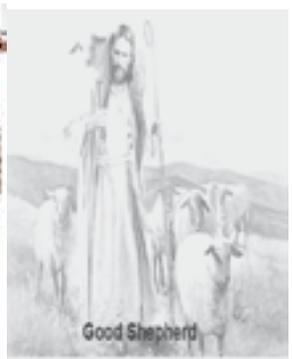
<sup>2</sup>"In the 330s BCE, Alexander the Great conquered Palestine, and the region changed hands numerous times during the wars of the *Diadochi*, ultimately joining the Seleucid Empire between 219–200 BCE. In 116 BCE, a Seleucid civil war resulted in the independence of certain regions including the minor Hasmonean principality in the Judean Mountains. From 110 BCE, the Hasmoneans extended their authority over much of Palestine, creating a Judean–Samaritan–Idumaean–Ituraean–Galilean alliance.<sup>[1]</sup> The Judean (Jewish, see *Ioudaioi*) control over the wider region resulted in it also becoming known as *Judaea*, a term that had previously only referred to the smaller region of the Judean Mountains. During 73–63 BCE, the Roman Republic extended its influence into the region in the Third Mithridatic War, conquering Judea in 63 BCE, and splitting the former Hasmonean Kingdom into five districts. In 70 CE, Titus sacked Jerusalem, resulting in the dispersal of the city's Jews and Christians to Yavne and Pella. In 132 CE, Hadrian joined the province of Iudaea with Galilee to form the new province of *Syria Palaestina*, and Jerusalem was renamed "Aelia Capitolina". During 259–272, the region fell under the rule of Odaenathus as King of the Palmyrene Empire. Following the victory of Christian emperor Constantine in the Civil Wars of the Tetrarchy (306–324), the Christianization of the Roman Empire began, and in 326, Constantine's mother Saint Helena visited Jerusalem and began the construction of churches and shrines. Palestine became a center of Christianity, attracting numerous monks and religious scholars. The Samaritan Revolts during this period caused their near extinction." ["History of Palestine," wikipedia.org]

<sup>3</sup>This compares to the total land mass of modern Germany of 357,021 km<sup>2</sup> (137,847 sq mi).





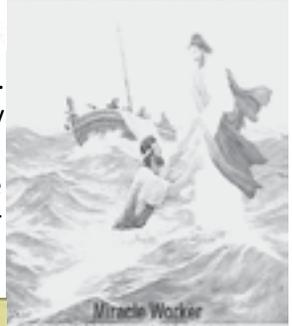
When the location of Jesus' ministry is charted out on a map, two centers become apparent as the primary places where the Lord carried out public ministry: *Galilee* with Capernaum as the primary city and *Jerusalem* in Judea and the immediately surrounding region. Limited activity took place in Samaria between Galilee and Judea. Also some activity occurred in the trans-Jordan region on the east side of the river.



What was this like? Were the two main regions similar or different? The economies of Galilee and Judea were dramatically different from one another. In the south, Judea was driven economically by the temple in Jerusalem. The countryside was sparsely settled outside of Jerusalem and was mostly arid mountainous terrain. The vast majority of the rural lands were owned by the temple in Jerusalem and the sheep and goats grown on them were basically for use as sacrificial animals in the temple. Most of the other trades both in the city as well as elsewhere depended on the temple in some way or another for their existence.



On the other hand, the land in Galilee was enormously more fertile, especially in lower Galilee. Agriculture and a fishing industry connected to the Sea of Galilee formed the economic foundation for life in Galilee. As a consequence the population density in Galilee was several times higher than in Judea, even though Jerusalem was by far the largest city in the entire region. Logistically, walking ten kilometers in Galilee would enable a teacher to interact with many more people than would be the case outside Jerusalem in Judea.



Overwhelmingly Jesus spent His time in Galilee preaching and ministering to the needs of the people. At least this is the impression gained from comparing the amount of narrative space devoted to Galilee by the gospel writers.



Matthew: 51% (4:12-18:35)     Mark: 53% (1:14-9:50)  
 Luke: 24% (4:14-9:56)     John: 15% (4:43-7:9)



This compares to relative little space devoted to ministry in Judea apart from the last week and the resurrection appearances of Jesus. Matthew give only 6% of his narrative to this, while Mark has 8%. Luke and John, on the other hand, give more attention to this ministry with 35% and 28% respectively.<sup>4</sup>

How long did Jesus' public ministry last? Given the substantial dif-

<sup>4</sup>Although the Passion Week and the Resurrection with Appearances take place almost exclusively in Judea at the end of Jesus' earthly life, they form separate literary units with distinctive emphases somewhat different that what precedes them. This is clear in the amount of space devoted to each phase of ministry:

	<b>Matthew:</b>	<b>Mark:</b>	<b>Luke:</b>	<b>John:</b>
Preparation	4%	0%	11%	2%
Beginnings	3%	2%	5%	16%
<b>Galilee</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>15%</b>
Judean-Perean	6%	8%	35%	28%
<b>Passion</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>33%</b>
<b>Resurrection</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>6%</b>

What we notice here is a common focus with Matthew and Mark, but individual difference between Luke and John. Clearly Galilee and the Passion week occupy the two dominant emphases, especially in Matthew and Luke.



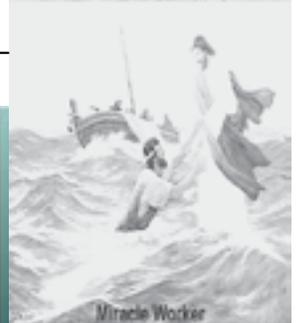


ferences in referencing dates and times between then and now, the estimates range from little over one year to three and a half years.<sup>5</sup> The majority of modern scholars favor the longer period of ministry. The progression of ministry is usually outlined as:<sup>6</sup>

1. The early Judean ministry. We learn of this primarily from John 2:13–4:43. Because of the geographical scheme by which Mark structures his Gospel (Galilee, Mk 1:14–7:23; outside Galilee, Mk 7:24–9:50; Judea, Mk 10:1–16:8), he and the other Synoptic writers do not speak of an early Judean ministry. Yet there are hints in their accounts that such a ministry existed. Compare Mark 10:46–52; 11:2–6; 14:3–9, 13–16, 49; Luke 13:34.
2. The Galilean ministry. Compare Mark 1:14–7:23 and parallels.
3. The period of travel. Compare Mark 7:24–9:50 and parallels.
4. The journey to Jerusalem and the Judean ministry. Compare Mark 10:1–16:8 and parallels.



Good Shepherd



Miracle Worker



Teacher



Savior



Son of God



**THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF CHRIST**  
**DAY THREE: PUBLIC MINISTRY**  
**MINISTRY IN GALILEE**

Galilee	Judea	Jerusalem	Jericho	Jerusalem	Jerusalem
1:14-7:23	10:1-16:8	10:1-16:8	10:1-16:8	10:1-16:8	10:1-16:8
1:14-7:23	10:1-16:8	10:1-16:8	10:1-16:8	10:1-16:8	10:1-16:8
1:14-7:23	10:1-16:8	10:1-16:8	10:1-16:8	10:1-16:8	10:1-16:8
1:14-7:23	10:1-16:8	10:1-16:8	10:1-16:8	10:1-16:8	10:1-16:8

Two pivotal events: 1) Calling of 12; 2) John's death  
 Initial summary: Mt. 4:12-17; Mk. 1:14-15; Lk. 4:14-15  
 Beginning excitement moves to preparing disciples

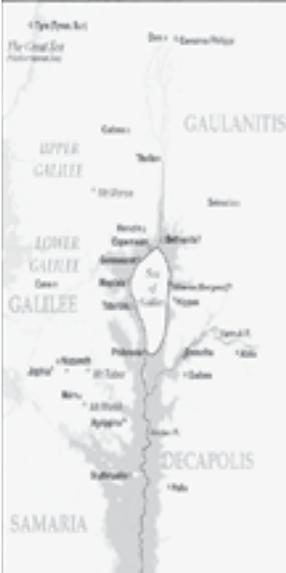


The ministry in Galilee is preceded somewhat with some activity found uniquely in John 1:19-4:42. These center (pericopes # 7-15 in list) on John's ministry in the Jordan River region, the calling of disciples, activity in Galilee and Jerusalem, and the Samaritan woman experience. The synoptic gospel writers do not include these narratives.

<sup>5</sup>"The Synoptic Gospels seem to indicate that the ministry of Jesus lasted a little more than a year. No yearly event such as a Passover is mentioned twice. Attempts have been made to establish an order of events as follows. Mark 1:9—baptism during a warm period before winter; Mark 2:23—springtime and harvest; Mark 6:39—spring; the events of Mark 6:45–13:37 requiring several months; Mark 14:1—Passover after a summer-fall-winter required in the preceding time period. The problem with such reasoning is that it assumes that Mark arranged his material in a precise chronological order. There are several reasons for doubting this. The fact that his material is arranged into two geographical divisions—Jesus' activities in Galilee (Mk 1–9) and his activities in Judea (10–16) suggests that the materials are placed where they are primarily for non-chronological reasons.

"Usually one turns to John for information concerning the length of Jesus' ministry. In John we have the following: an early ministry (Jn 1:29–2:12), Passover number 1 (Jn 2:13), January/February (Jn 4:35), Passover number 2 (Jn 6:4), the Feast of Tabernacles (Jn 7:2), the Feast of Dedication (Jn 10:22) and Passover number 3 (Jn 11:55). Added to this is a reference to 'a festival of the Jews' (Jn 5:1), which is ambiguous. If John has arranged his material chronologically and is referring to three distinct Passovers, then we have either a two-year-plus ministry or a three-year-plus ministry, according to how we interpret John 5:1." [Robert Stein, *Jesus the Messiah: A Survey of the Life of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1996), 39.]

<sup>6</sup>Robert Stein, *Jesus the Messiah: A Survey of the Life of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1996), 75.



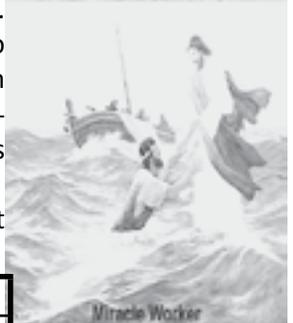


Two major turning points surface in this period of ministry by Jesus. First, He assembles twelve disciples as close followers and then commissions them as apostles: Mk. 3:13-19a; Mt. 10:1-4; Lk. 6:12-16. As one will notice in the sequence of pericopes by each of the synoptic writers, this commissioning is not placed at the same spot. Second, the death of John the Baptist at the hands of Herod marks the second turning point in public ministry: Mk. 6:14-29; Mt. 14:1-12; Lk. 9:7-9. This event is sequenced at the same place in the synoptic gospels, further highlighting its importance. During the third phase of Galilean activity from John's death until Jesus leaves Galilee for Jerusalem, most of His activity takes place outside Galilee in the surrounding districts where Herod had no legal authority. At the heart of this lies the shift in developing opposition to Christ. Up to John's death, His main opponents were the Pharisees who opposed Him on religious grounds. But with John's execution, Herod brings Roman governmental hostility into the picture, which Jesus seeks to avoid until His timing is right to head south to Jerusalem.

At the outset of public ministry in Galilee, the synoptic writers present an introductory summation of Jesus' message during His ministry:

Matthew 4:12-17	Mark 1:14-15	Luke 4:14-15
<p>2 Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. 13 He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, 14 so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: 15 "Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles — 16 the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned." 17 From that time Jesus began to proclaim, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."</p>	<p>14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."</p>	<p>14 Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. 15 He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.</p>
<p>12 Ἀκούσας δὲ ὅτι Ἰωάννης παρεδόθη ἀνεχώρησεν εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν. 13 καὶ καταλιπὼν τὴν Ναζαρά ἐλθὼν κατώκησεν εἰς Καφαρναούμ τὴν παραθαλασσίαν ἐν ὄροις Ζαβουλὼν καὶ Νεφθαλίμ. 14 ἵνα πληρωθῆ τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ Ἡσαΐου τοῦ προφήτου λέγοντος. 15 γῆ Ζαβουλὼν καὶ γῆ Νεφθαλίμ, ὁδὸν θαλάσσης, πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου, Γαλιλαία τῶν ἐθνῶν, 16 ὁ λαὸς ὁ καθήμενος ἐν σκότει φῶς εἶδεν μέγα, καὶ τοῖς καθημένοις ἐν χώρα καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου φῶς ἀνέτειλεν αὐτοῖς. 17 Ἀπὸ τότε ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς κηρύσσειν καὶ λέγειν· μετανοεῖτε· ἡγγικεν γὰρ ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.</p>	<p>14 Μετὰ δὲ τὸ παραδοθῆναι τὸν Ἰωάννην ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν κηρύσσειν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ 15 καὶ λέγων ὅτι πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς καὶ ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ· μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεῦτε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ.</p>	<p>14 Καὶ ὑπέστρεψεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐν τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ πνεύματος εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν. καὶ φήμη ἐξῆλθεν καθ' ὅλης τῆς περιχώρου περὶ αὐτοῦ. 15 καὶ αὐτὸς ἐδίδασκεν ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς αὐτῶν δοξαζόμενος ὑπὸ πάντων.</p>

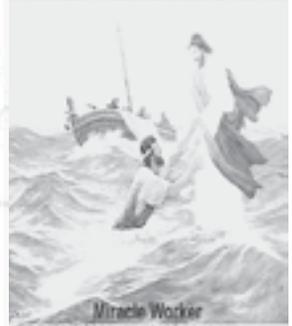
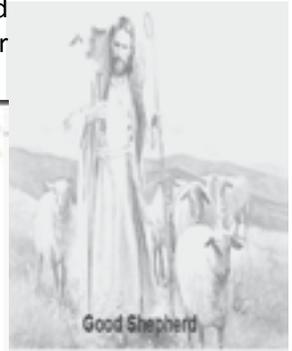
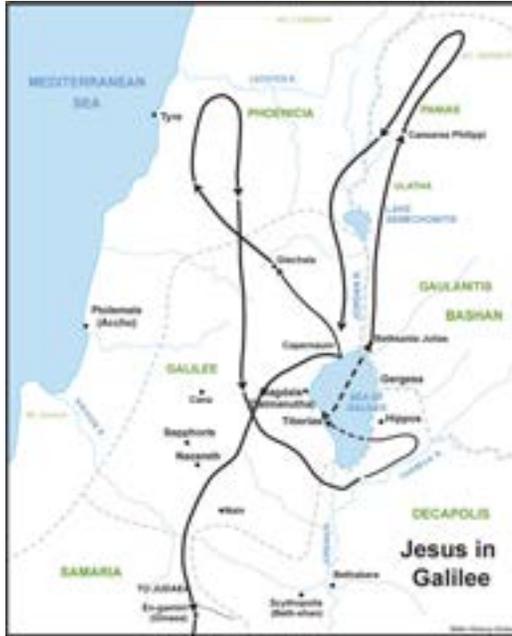
As is easily detectable, each gospel writer has his own way of introducing





the ministry of Jesus in Galilee. Matthew takes his Marcan source and inserts the prophetic fulfillment material in vv. 14-16. Luke, on the other hand, goes his own way of emphasizing the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

What one notices by reading through all the biblical texts is a beginning excitement from the crowds of people in the ministry of Jesus. This initial 'honeymoon' period -- perhaps the first year -- gives Him opportunity to gather around Him the twelve disciples who would bear the responsibility of carrying on His message once He was out of the picture. But after a while religious opposition to Jesus builds and ironically enough originates mainly out of Judea and Jerusalem in particular. Representatives of the Pharisees regularly make the trip north in order to monitor His activities and to oppose Him at every opportunity. A lot of effort is then consumed, especially during the second phase, on dealing with controversy in ministry. His healings, especially on the Jewish sabbath, are opposed. Much of His teaching is rejected as not following the scribal traditions that defined the Judaism of His time. Jesus' Messianic claims in particular spark hostility, and lead the religious authorities to increasingly view Jesus not just as a threat to them but as a national danger to the Jewish people.



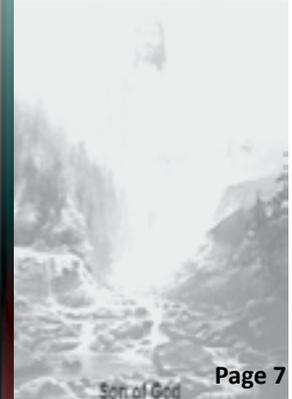
When John is executed by Herod, the situation changes dramatically for Jesus in Galilee. Now Herod is getting involved in the hostility to Jesus as an assumed political threat, just as his father, Herod the Great, had tried to kill of 'the King of the Jews' as a baby years before. Thus Jesus spends less and less time inside the district of Galilee where Herod had authority. Increasing amounts of time are spent on the eastern and northern sides of the Sea of Galilee. The focus of ministry here is on intensive preparation of the twelve for Jesus' departure. For the first time, He begins speaking of a Passover trip to Jerusalem that will lead to His execution.



**THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF CHRIST**  
**DAY THREE: PUBLIC MINISTRY**  
**MINISTRY IN JUDEA-PEREA**

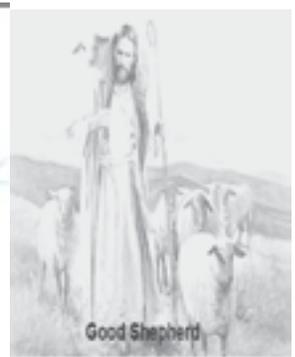
Upper Galilee	Mt.	485	Lk.	7:18-31:64
Judean-Perea	Mt.	19:1-28:34	Lk.	9:37-19:28
Persea	Mt.	19:29	Lk.	19:29
Early Judean	Mt.	20:1-21:1	Lk.	9:37-19:28
Early Perea	Mt.	21:2-22:1	Lk.	19:29-20:17
Later Judean	Mt.	22:2-23:1	Lk.	20:18-27
Later Perea	Mt.	23:2-24:1	Lk.	20:28-27

- Most difficult segment to understand
- Luke & John fill in most of the gaps here.
- Period of preparation for Passion Week in Jerusalem

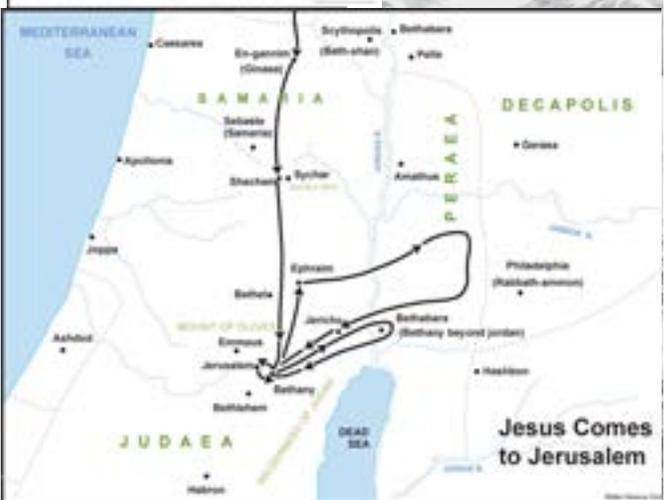




The activity of Jesus between His departure from Galilee and the final week before His crucifixion is the most difficult segment to understand chronologically. This comes about mainly because Matthew and Mark skip over the early segments and only portray Jesus leaving Galilee and going down the east bank of the Jordan River to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration. The first map on the right portrays this route of Jesus.



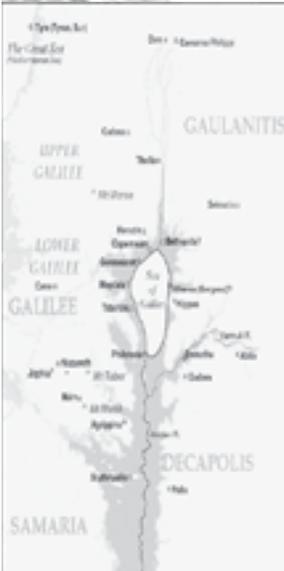
The challenge is that both Luke and John present individually different accounts of this period of activity. Attempts to reconcile all four accounts have not been successful. With this we get a vivid reminder that the gospel writers, although utilizing in limited ways the ancient literary form of a βίος, a life of a famous person, are not much concerned with a strict chronological presentation of the story of Jesus. Thus we do well to recognize this and to focus our attention primarily on what they were seeking to tell us about the period of ministry.



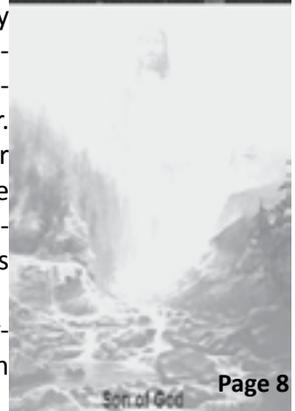
When we do this, we are rewarded with some of the greatest spiritual insights of Jesus' entire public ministry. Luke in particular filled with rich materials (pericopes # 67 - 119 in the list). This period covers 9:57-19:27 in his story, some 35% of his gospel account. John also presents a lot of invaluable material about Jesus during the period of ministry as well, although his story is distinctly different from that of Luke (pericopes # 26 - 50 in the list). John 7:10-11:54 -- some 28% of his gospel account -- contains this spiritual insight from Jesus' ministry. But Matthew and Mark should not be overlooked, even though their material is much shorter. Matthew devotes some 6% of his account to this period in 19:1-20:34 (pericopes # 119-125 in the list). And Mark about 8% of his narrative to this period in 19:1-52 (pericopes # 55-60 in the list).



When one analyzes the scripture materials one overarching theme does emerge. Jesus spent a lot of time and energy, especially with the twelve disciples, teaching them and preparing them for what would lay ahead once they reached Jerusalem. Remnants of traditional Jewish messianic thinking still prevailed in their thinking leading them to the expectation of a spectacular inauguration of the rule of the Messiah at Passover. Despite Jesus' best efforts, this thinking would not be erased from their minds until Christ's ascension back to Heaven. With the excitement of the numbers of Jewish pilgrims streaming from Galilee and headed to Jerusalem for the Passover, there was a lot of curiosity and interest in this Jesus of Nazareth and whether or not He was indeed the promised Messiah.



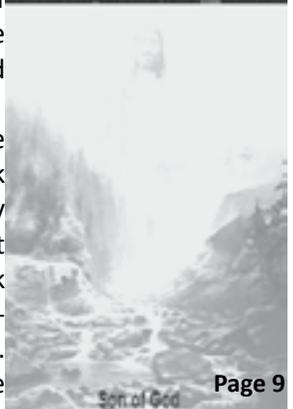
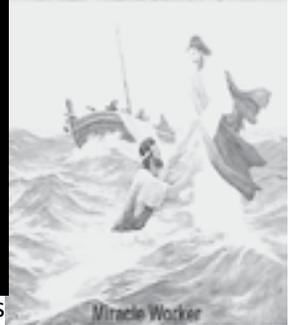
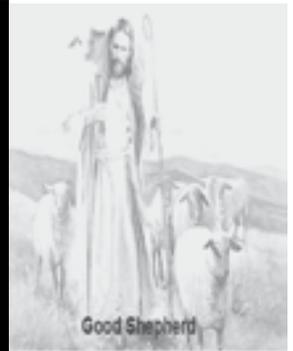
Much of our contemporary preparation for Easter as modern believers could benefit greatly with serious contemplation of this material in the Judean - Perea ministry of Christ.





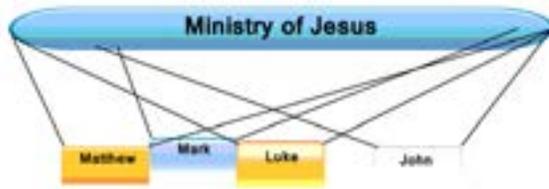
**THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF CHRIST**  
**DAY THREE: PUBLIC MINISTRY**  
**MINISTRY COMPONENTS**

- > Analyzing at two levels
- > How the gospel writers assembled their story
- > How Jesus put together His ministry



What we need to explore now is How did Jesus get His message across during His public ministry.

But first some clarification of a methodological issue must be put on the table, so that we can proceed correctly. Every analysis of Jesus' ministry must reflect awareness of two separate levels of information. First is how Jesus approached getting His message across during His earthly ministry. The reason this becomes important to probe is because two entirely different approaches to describing that strategy are embedded in the gospel accounts.



The synoptic gospels follow one basic pattern, while the fourth gospel uses a dramatically different approach. Thus the second level is to consider the distinctive methods of story telling by each of the gospel writers. As the above chart suggests, each gospel writer has a different starting and ending point. The arrangement of materials between these two points will be substantially different from each other. Thus it becomes mandatory to have some awareness of this, if we are to sort out the strategy of Jesus properly.

What were the gospel writers approaches? The four canonical gospels fall into two categories of writings: 1) the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke; and 2) the gospel of John. Both sets use the building blocks of narratives and didactic materials for presenting their story of Jesus. But the kinds of sub-forms used by the two groups are what set the groups apart from one another, along with how each writer assembled the building blocks to create his story.

One would need to remember that the gospels were written some thirty to sixty years after Christ's earthly ministry. In my estimation, Mark is the first and dates to the late 60s. Matthew comes next in the early 70s and is followed by Luke in the late 70s to early 80s. John comes last in the early to mid 90s. Matthew and Luke had access to a copy of Mark along with other sources including the so-called Q document which is reflected in passages common to Matthew and Luke but not found in Mark. The accounts for the generally similar organizing structure for these three



gospels, along with the reality that some 90 plus per cent of the content of Mark is reproduced in Matthew and Luke -- portions word for word in the Greek text. For this reason these three gospels are often called the Synoptic Gospels, implying that they 'see' the life of Jesus the same basic way.

It is highly doubtful that the apostle John had copies of these three previously written documents when he composed his gospel at Ephesus in the 90s of the first Christian century.

In the time between Jesus' ascension to Heaven in 30 AD and the composition of Mark in the late 60s, the early church developed a substantial tradition both in written and mostly in oral forms containing what Jesus said and did during His earthly ministry. The pre-formed literary units of material surface extensively in the content of the synoptic gospels. The fourth gospel gives indication of working off another, different set of mostly written sources when it was composed later on.

The different starting points for the gospel writers are the birth narratives in Matthew and Luke, the launching of public ministry in Mark, and a formal Prologue in John 1:1-18. The gospels end somewhat differently. Mark in its original form ended in 16:8 with Jesus' resurrection appearance to the women in the garden. But the other three gospels end some time later with their own individual sets of resurrection appearances.

The variations of compiling the elements of the Jesus story between these beginning and ending points are substantial, in spite of some broad commonalities.

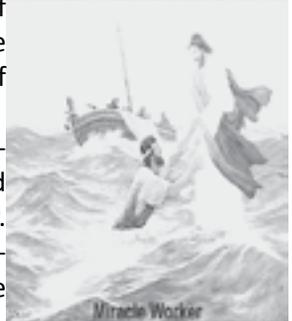
	<b>Matthew:</b>	<b>Mark:</b>	<b>Luke:</b>	<b>John:</b>
Preparation	4%	0%	11%	2%
Beginnings	3%	2%	5%	16%
<b>Galilee</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Judean-Perean</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>28%</b>
Passion	34%	34%	20%	33%
Resurrection	2%	3%	5%	6%

In addition to the varying amounts of space devoted to each segment, the sequential variations of the listing of the pericopes is extensive as well. Only in some key places do the gospel writers come together. The most notable section is the Passion week where a common structure is used for all four gospels and a much greater uniformity both of duplicated pericopes in a very similar sequencing are found.

Inside the general forms of narratives and didactic materials one finds a relatively diverse set of sub-forms.

**First, the synoptic gospels.** Among the narrative materials two general types surface with regularity: episodic and summary narratives. The first describes some particular event that happened possibly on one day or over an extended period but is viewed as a single event. Inside the synoptic gospels sub categories are detectable that generally have a counterpart in the surrounding literature of the ancient world. These forms include sub forms with sufficient identifiable common traits to form a genre: the Infancy Narrative, the Pronouncement Story, the Miracle Story, the Hero Story, and the Passion Narrative. The other basic type is the Summary Narrative. These are frequently tucked in between a series of episodic narratives etc. For example, Mt. 4:23-25 as a summary narrative follows the episodic narrative on the calling of the four disciples in Mt. 4:18-22. The summary narrative is used to set the general occasion for the lengthy speech of Jesus in Mt. 5:1-7:29 called the Sermon on the Mount. These summations tend to stress dominating activities and/or themes over a period of ministry. These forms give primary emphasis to what Jesus did.

The other aspect centers on what Jesus said. Here the patterns gen-





erally falls into Sayings (λόγια/λόγιον) and Parables (παραβολή). The Sayings category is not well defined and thus wide variations of patterns have been assessed by scholars in the field. Generally, these forms are short very concise expressions such as “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick” in Mt. 9:12//Mk. 2:17//Lk. 5:31. Proverbs, aphorisms etc. are labels commonly employed to categorize this material. Often they employ analogous expression comparing some earthly reality to a spiritual principle. But this idea moves clearly to the ancient -- rather than modern -- meaning of a parable. This comparative form was the primary vehicle for Jesus communicating the central message of the Kingdom of God.

Of course in dialogical narratives, where Jesus is talking back and forth with other individuals, more straight forward idea expression is found. Clearly Jesus spoke in a more typical manner when engaging others in conversation. It is when He was teaching people spiritual truths that the more identical oral forms surface in the synoptic gospels.

At a slightly different level one finds the oral material in the synoptic gospels especially brought together in ‘speeches’ that represent either ‘preaching’ (κηρύσσω) and / or ‘teaching’ (διδάσκων). Matthew’s gospel is the most dramatic at this point by being arranged around five major speeches, i.e., discourses, which Jesus gave over the duration of His public ministry.

**Second, the fourth gospel.** Utilizing the building blocks of narrative and didactic expression, John did not cast the story of Jesus in the same framework as the synoptic gospels. Modern efforts to identify this difference will usually label the fourth gospel as the ‘theological’ gospel over against the ‘historical’ gospels in the synoptics. But this is not entirely accurate nor appropriate. All four gospels reflect both theology and history.

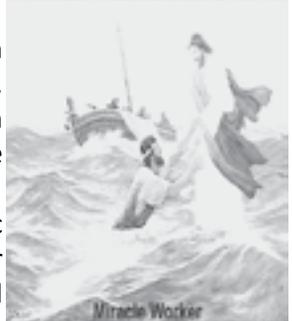
The literary strategy of the fourth gospel is simple. In the initial Prologue found in 1:1-18, John lays out a conceptual vision of Christ as the divine Logos. Then the story of Jesus in 1:19-21:25 is told around the motifs presented in the Prologue. This gives a very different coloring to the story. John. His intention was to present the gospel of Christ to a late first century overwhelmingly non-Jewish Christian audience coming under increasingly Gnostic philosophical thinking.

The only place where John intersects the synoptic gospels with a common literary form is with the miracle narratives. Out of the approximately 35 specific miracles done by Jesus, John narratives a total of eight. And only two of these are found in the synoptic gospels: 1) Feeding of 5,000, Mt. 14:13-21//Mk. 6:30-44//Lk. 9:10-17//Jn. 6:1-15; and 2) Jesus walking on the water, Mt. 14:22-33//Mk. 6:47-52//Jn. 6:16-21.

But John labels them differently from the synoptic gospel writers. He calls them σημεῖα, “signs,” whereas in the synoptic gospels the dominant term is δύναμις, power, but usually in the plural δυνάμεις with the sense of miracle or wonder. Also is τέρας, ‘wonder,’ mostly with σημεῖον in the plural expression τέρατα καὶ σημεῖα, ‘wonders and signs.’<sup>7</sup> The first term δυνάμεις stresses miracles as unusual demonstrations of divine power; τέρατα underscores miracles as divine actions that astonish and amaze onlookers; and σημεῖα defines miracles as pointers to something beyond the divine action, namely, the validation of Jesus as Son of God and the veracity of His Gospel message.

What becomes apparent from this is hopefully that each gospel writer chose his own distinctive strategy for presenting his Gospel message to a

<sup>7</sup>All three terms, δυνάμεις καὶ τέρατα καὶ σημεῖα, powers and wonders and signs, are found together only in Acts 2:22 and 2 Cor. 12:12b.





special audience in the second half of the first century. Although heavily dependent upon sources -- both oral and written (cf. Lk. 1:1-4) -- each writer customized his story to best suit the spiritual needs of his targeted audience.

At the second level of analysis comes then some assessment of Jesus' own strategy for communicating His message to His early first century Jewish audience. Here the analysis becomes more difficult with probing Jesus as a communicator of divine truth. Most studies concentrate on the content of what He spoke and demonstrated through His actions, since this is much easier to analyze given the limited sources of information. That we will explore in the next study to some extent. But what I want to stay with here is methodology. If one concludes that the methodology found in the four gospels equals Jesus' methods, then an impossible dilemma surfaces because of the dramatic difference in methodology between the synoptic gospels and the fourth gospel.

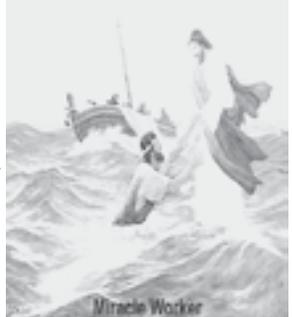
But in probing beyond the gospel writers methodologies to that of Jesus contained in these gospel documents, some patterns emerge that seem to be common to all four gospel documents and consistent generally with what we know about first century Jewish scribal teachers and their methods.

The one label that seems to work best and to be most appropriate for a first century Jewish setting is that of prophet, προφήτης.<sup>8</sup> He stood in the tradition of the OT prophets with a divinely commissioned message to deliver to the Jewish people.<sup>9</sup> The twin vehicles of communicating this message were διδάσκων ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς αὐτῶν καὶ κηρύσσων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom (cf. Mt. 4:23). Although modern interpreters tend to draw sharp lines of distinction between preaching and teaching, such is not the case of Jesus' methodology. The same terms will apply to whether He is speaking to an audience inside a synagogue or sitting on a hillside or by the seashore. The sense is more that in His teaching

<sup>8</sup>"Jesus appears as a prophet (FGils, Jésus prophète [synoptics], '57 [lit.]) appraised for his surprising knowledge **J 4:19** and ability to perform miracles **9:17**. οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ προφήτης Ἰησοῦς **Mt 21:11**. Cp. vs. **46; Mk 6:15a; Lk 7:16** (πρ. μέγας), **39; 13:33; 24:19; J 7:52**. This proverb is applied to him: οὐκ ἔστιν προφήτης ἄτιμος εἰ μὴ ἐν τῇ πατρίδι αὐτοῦ **Mt 13:57; Mk 6:4; cp. Lk 4:24; J 4:44; Ox 1:10f** (GTh 31; EPreuschen, Das Wort v. verachteten Proph.: ZNW 17, 1916, 33–48). He was also taken to be one of the ancient prophets come to life again: **Mt 16:14; Mk 8:28**. πρ. τις τῶν ἀρχαίων **Lk 9:8, 19**.—In **Ac 3:22f** and **7:37** (cp. 1QS 9:11), Dt 18:15, 19 is interpreted w. ref. to the Messiah and hence to Jesus (HSchoeps, Theol. u. Geschichte des Judentums '49, 87–98).—For J, Jesus is ὁ προφήτης the Prophet 6:14; 7:40, a title of honor which is disclaimed by the Baptist **1:21, 25** (s. exc. in the Hdb. on J 1:21; HFischel, JBL 65, '46, 157–74). Cp. **Lk 7:39** v.l.—RMeyer, Der Proph. aus Galiläa '40; PDavies, Jesus and the Role of the Prophet: JBL 64, '45, 241–54; AHiggins, Jesus as Proph.: ET 57, '45/46, 292–94; FYoung, Jesus the Proph.: JBL 68, '49, 285–99.—RSchnackenburg, D. Erwartung des 'Propheten' nach dem NT u. Qumran: Studia Evangelica '59, 622, n. 1; HBraun, Qumran u. das NT, I, '66, 100–106." [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 3rd ed., S.V. προφήτης.

<sup>9</sup>Other communication oriented labels applied to Jesus in the NT include: διδάσκαλος, teacher (Mt 8:19; 12:38; 19:16; 22:16, 24, 36; Mk 4:38; 9:17, 38; 10:17, 20, 35; 12:14, 19, 32; 13:1; Lk 3:12; 7:40; 9:38; 10:25; 11:45; 12:13; 18:18; 19:39; 20:21, 28, 39; 21:7; J8:4); and Παββί / Παββουί (=רַבִּי; Mt 9:11; 17:24; 23:8; 26:18; Mk 5:35; 14:14; Lk 6:40b; 8:49; 22:11; J 11:28).

The tendency inside the NT is not to use personal 'labels.' Concepts such as teaching tend to be grouped around three perspectives: the 'teacher' (διδάσκαλος) who is teaching (διδάσκω) a teaching (διδαχή / διδασκαλία). The NT emphasis on personal action gravitates toward the verb and the abstract noun, more so than toward the personal noun. Thus a much wider range of terminology will be employed in reference to Jesus communicating His message to His audiences. The personal noun 'labels' are very limited inside the NT.





He was preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. But as Matthew's summarizing statement about Jesus' Galilean ministry indicates, a third facet served as a critical validation of His message and as a concrete demonstration of God's care for His people: *καὶ θεραπεύων πᾶσαν νόσον καὶ πᾶσαν μαλακίαν ἐν τῷ λαῷ*, and *healing every disease and every sickness among the people*. His audiences were dominated by Jewish peasants who were largely ignored and condemned by aristocratic Jews as well as by religious leaders among both the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Jesus' message in both word and deed resonated powerfully with their simple, uncomplicated piety toward God.<sup>10</sup>

Consequently His communication methods corresponded largely to what the people were accustomed to from the Jewish scribes of His day. The distinctive came with His creative and superior use of their communication methods as evidenced by the crowd's reaction at the end of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 7:28-29):

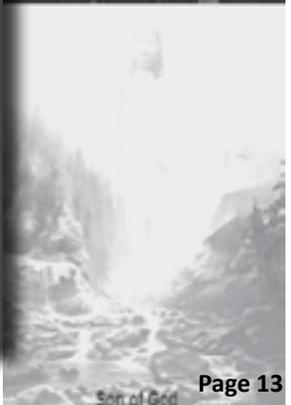
28 Καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τοὺς λόγους τούτους, ἐξεπλήσσαντο οἱ ὄχλοι ἐπὶ τῇ διδαχῇ αὐτοῦ· 29 ἦν γὰρ διδάσκων αὐτοὺς ὡς ἐξουσίαν ἔχων καὶ οὐχ ὡς οἱ γραμματεῖς αὐτῶν.

28 Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, 29 for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

Not only was superior methodology at work here, but a dramatically more appealing message was presented to the crowds. Together these communicated a new and superior teacher who was in direct communication with the Heavenly Father. That is, the 'sermon' (here labeled 'teaching') pointed to the uniqueness of the Teacher.

The challenge to the gospel writers composing their stories three or more decades later and mostly to a non-Jewish readership with little appreciation of the Jewish scribe and his ways of communicating to fellow Jews was to tell the story of Jesus in a manner that was true to who Jesus was in His Jewish setting but also in a manner that resonated with a Gentile audience with different understandings on how important religious teachings should be communicated. The writers managed to strike a healthy balance between being true to Jesus in His world and the later, very different world of their readers. This was, on the other hand, the fatal mistake of the much later apocryphal gospel writers who so focused on the assumed world, which was very anti-semitic, of their targeted readers that they completely ignored the very Jewish world of Jesus. Thus, a phony fantasized portrait of Jesus emerges totally out of touch with the historical Jesus of first century Palestine.

There are important lessons for us today in this!



<sup>10</sup>For a more detailed exploration of this, see my lecture "Frömmigkeit in den urchristlichen Gemeinden" at [cranfordville.com](http://cranfordville.com)

