

We will begin the 4th lecture on “An Introduction to the New Testament.” /We will start the lecture by reading Luke 1:1-4. / “Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.”

/Today we will study the Gospels, which start the New Testament off. /The Gospels are very important. /They were written after Paul’s epistles were recorded, but the details of the Gospels come first historically and chronologically.

/The gospel of Jesus Christ’s birth, his teachings and ministry, his suffering and the cross, and his resurrection and ascension were widely known among the apostles and the churches.

/1. The process by which the Gospels were recorded. /We can explain the writing of the Gospels as happening in several stages. **/(1) Everything written in the Gospels happened in history.**

/Jesus was born to Mary, he did public ministry, Jesus spoke, and he carried the cross and died. /All these things written in the Gospels have historicity.

/The Bible is historically accurate. /It isn’t fiction, theory, philosophy, or man’s imagination or wishes, but it is actual history.

/Some theologians deny the historicity of the Gospels. /They deny the historicity of Jesus walking on water, the miracle of feeding five thousand people with five loaves and two fish, the virgin birth of Jesus, or his resurrection from the grave.

/As it is recorded in Luke 1:1, the Gospels are a historical record of things that actually happened. /Therefore, the fact that the events of the Gospels are historically true is the first step of the Gospels being recorded.

/(2) There must be eyewitnesses to the events. /Luke 1:2 says, “Those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word.” /For example, Luke, who wrote the Gospel of Luke, was not an eyewitness of all the events.

/When the angel Gabriel came to Elizabeth and Zechariah to bring the news of John the Baptist’s birth, no one was there to witness the event. /When Gabriel told Mary that she would conceive a child, no one was there to see or hear all that had happened.

/There were people who were directly involved in the events written in the Gospels, and there were people who witnessed the events. Therefore, someone heard from those directly involved or from eyewitnesses. /The fact that there were eyewitnesses enables us to know about the process by which the Gospels were written.

/ (3) The testimonies of eyewitnesses and witnesses. / Luke 1:2 says, “Just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us.” / It means there were the testimonies of eyewitnesses.

/ Most of the eyewitnesses were the apostles themselves. / 1 John 1:1 says, / “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—“

/ The apostles were eyewitnesses to the Word. / Other eyewitnesses and witnesses include Mary and the shepherds who were watching their sheep at night. / We call these testimonies “oral tradition.” / They would have orally passed down the things they had seen.

/ (4) One by one, people began to record these testimonies. / Luke 1:1 says, “Many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us.” / The people who wanted to write down what happened collected the data, organized it, and compiled a narrative of the things to leave a record.

/ Obviously, not everyone who compiles a narrative is an author of the Bible. / Not all of their records were included in the Bible. / However, many had undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that were accomplished.

/ Luke read and referred to the same data that was studied by the other authors of the Gospels. Luke probably used his own data and listened to the testimonies of others when writing his book of the Gospel.

/ Matthew, Mark, and John probably did the same. / They would have referred to the testimonies of those who compiled a narrative. / Now, we’ve come to the last stage of the writing of the Gospels.

/ (5) The authors of the Bible, especially the authors of the Gospels, had to select all the testimonies and data, put them in order, and record them as books. / In Luke 1:3, Luke says it seemed good to him to follow all things closely for some time past and then write an orderly account for the most excellent Theophilus.

/ When it says “an orderly account,” it means the authors of the Gospel Books applied the various testimonies so that they would be consistent with the purpose of their writing. They made sure to preserve the historicity of every event, and they edited in an orderly fashion when they recorded the books.

/ The Holy Spirit was there, and he intervened in the five steps of the writing of the Gospels. That is how the Gospels and all the other books of the Bible are complete in their written form today. / As we talked about before, this is the inspiration of the Scripture.

/God was there during the entire process of recording the testimonies of all the witnesses. He inspired the authors of the Bible in their thoughts and expressions. All of it happened through organic, verbal, infallible, and plenary inspiration.

/2. The relationship between the Gospels and Christ. /Within the Gospels, we find the core of our theology, which are Christ and his cross. /Without the Gospels, there is no Christ.

/If we did not have the Gospels, we would not have encountered Christ, nor would we know him. /We cannot imagine Christianity without the Gospels. /The primary source for us to know about Jesus Christ and trust in him is the Gospels.

/The Gospels tell us about Jesus Christ, who is God's Son, the Son of Man, the Lord, the Lamb, and the Word. /The primary data, the crucial testimonies, about Christ's incarnation, his suffering and death on the cross, and his resurrection and ascension, are found in the Gospels.

/The Gospels are an accurate, reliable, inerrant record of the character, ministry, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus, who is a real part of history. /In the 19th century, liberal theologians started a movement called, "The Quest for the Historical Jesus." They argued that Jesus in the Gospels isn't an actual historical figure, but he was a projection of the culture, faith, and philosophy of the authors of the Gospels.

/However, every event recorded in the Bible is historically accurate. /If Jesus in the Gospels is the product of imagination and philosophy, then we lose the basis of our faith.

/We need to carefully read the Gospels and learn about who Christ is. /If we do not understand the Gospels, then we cannot understand Christ, and if we cannot understand Christ, we not only cannot understand the Gospels, but we cannot understand the Old and New Testaments.

/Christ and his cross are the center of our theology and faith. /Many people think they already know a lot about the details of the Gospel Books. /However, we still do not know what we should know about Christ.

/We must have a deeper understanding of Christ's life, his teachings, and the meaning of his cross, all of which are written in the Gospels. /We go astray from our faith because we do not clearly understand the meaning of the cross of Christ.

/When we do not have a clear understanding of Christ and his cross, we become careless about sin, and we compromise with the world. /As Peter admonishes us, we must always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks us for a reason for the hope that is in us. 1 Peter 3:15.

/It isn't enough for us to say that we believe in Christ. /We need to know the reason for and basis of our faith. /We need to know about the Christ that we believe in. /The Gospels lay down the foundations for these things.

/3. Why do we need four Gospels? /The New Testament includes four Gospel Books. /Of these four, Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the "Synoptic Gospels."

/The Gospel of John is mentioned separately as the fourth Gospel. / "Synoptic" means they share a similar point of view, or view something in the same way. /This word was used in the late 18th century by German Biblical theologian J.J. Griesbach, and it later became used as a proper noun for the three Gospels.

/Because the three Gospels repeat each other in the text, share many similarities in structure, content, and tone, they are called the Synoptic Gospels.

/We cannot deny the fact that though they are similar in many ways, each Gospel has its unique way of bearing witness about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

/Then why is each Gospel Book different in its characteristics? Above all else, it is God's will to give us a more rich and comprehensive gospel of Christ.

/One person cannot provide a perfect testimony about someone else. /This is more so for someone as great, special, and mysterious as Jesus.

/Matthew, Mark, or Luke could not write everything about Jesus on their own. /It is impossible for one person to write everything about Jesus. /If someone asks us why there are four Gospel Books in the Bible, we need to tell them that we cannot bear witness about Jesus Christ with just one book.

/Therefore, we shouldn't complain about having four Gospels, but we need to give thanks. /God's providence gave us the gospel of the Son of God through the four authors of the Gospels.

/Asking why need four Gospels is like asking why we need four books of the Major Prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. /These prophets were appointed in the providence of God. /This is the same for the Gospels.

/The four Gospel Books give us a broader perspective of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. The Gospels help us by finding ways in which we can apply the message of the gospel to whatever situation we are in.

/Let me tell you a simpler reason for why there are four Gospel Books. The reason is the authors had special readers in mind when they recorded the Gospels.

/Each author emphasized the points of the gospel message that they thought were most appropriate for their readers. /For example, Luke wrote the Gospel of Luke with Theophilus in mind, and Matthew wrote the Gospel of Matthew with the Jews in mind.

/The authors of the Gospels wrote the Gospels according to the needs they were dealing with. Each author had his own class of readers. /This is similar to why Paul had to write multiple epistles.

/4. The similarities and differences among the four Gospels. /In other words, we can call it unity and diversity. /The four Gospels are similar in that the authors of the Gospels all wanted to write one gospel.

/Early on, the Gospel Books were circulated without having titles, but the future generations added the names of the authors to call these books “The Gospel of ____.” Each author did not write a different gospel, but they were sharing the same gospel.

/If someone wants to properly and deeply know about Jesus’ life, ministry, teachings, and cross, he must not be obsessed about one particular Gospel Book while neglecting the three other Gospels.

/The four Gospels combined tell us about one person, Jesus. /At the same time, we must not ignore the unique value of each Gospel Book. /Some people find the four Gospels to be inconvenient, and they try to make these four Gospels into one.

/The truth is the four Gospels seem to have small differences and inconsistencies, and from the beginning, people have tried to resolve this issue.

/In the 2nd century, someone by the name of Tatiana harmonized the four Gospels to create one book called the Diatessaron. /Tatiana attempted to condense the four Gospels into one authoritative word, but the result was unsatisfactory.

/The reason is each book of the Gospels has its unique value. /Augustine also wrote a book called “Harmony of the Gospels.”

/Oftentimes, we find differences in content and structure within the Gospels, not among the Synoptic Gospels, but between the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John.

/For example, the Synoptic Gospels talk a lot about Jesus healing people of their sicknesses, Jesus chasing out evil spirits, and Jesus’ parables. On the other hand, the Gospel of John only includes two of Jesus’ parables.

/The Gospel of John records many miracles that are only found in the book. /For example, the miracle of the transformation of water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana, the miracle of Jesus healing the man blind from birth, and the miracle of Jesus raising Lazarus to life are only written in John.

/The Gospel of John also talks about Jesus as “logos,” Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus, and Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well. Furthermore, the book talks about Jesus forgiving the woman who was caught committing adultery, Jesus’ last prayer, and other unique details.

/Still, there are many important similarities between the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John.

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/All of the Gospels bear witness to the fact that “Jesus is the Son of God, that he is the Messiah who died on the cross for our sins.” /The four Gospel Books all bear witness about Jesus.

/Therefore, the four Gospels do not contradict each other, but they complement each other. Each of the four Gospels has its unique value.

/5. The purpose of recording the Gospels. /The authors wrote the Gospels for four purposes.

/First, their historical purpose. /We can say that this is the most realistic and first purpose of the Gospels being written. /As eyewitnesses one by one began to pass away, the apostles felt the need to preserve the testimonies about Jesus and the knowledge of the truth of the gospel.

/The knowledge of how Jesus came to this world, his character, ministry, teachings, death, and resurrection was determined to be best preserved permanently and historically in the form of literature.

/If the knowledge about Jesus was not preserved, there would be no way for us to secure the gospel’s historicity and objectivity.

/Second, their evangelistic purpose. /The Gospels were written to make Jesus known to those that do not know the gospel of Jesus. /John wrote this in the Gospel of John.

/ “But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” John 20:31.

/Luke recorded the Gospel of Luke so that Theophilus would have a proper understanding of Jesus, that he would believe in Jesus. /This is the evangelistic purpose.

/Third, their didactic purpose. /The Gospels were written so that we could accurately teach more things about faith. /Even the believers who already knew and believed in Jesus needed the Gospels.

/Through the Gospels, believers of all ages and generations learn Jesus' teachings and learn about who He is.

/Fourth, their geographical or distributive purpose. /The gospel of Jesus was recorded so that it would be distributed to faraway places. /Time and space limit the spreading of the gospel by means of oral tradition and proclamation.

/The written Bible was passed on to future generations through the scribes. With the advancement of printing technology, publishing allows for the Bible to be translated into every tongue and to be dispersed throughout the entire world.

/We need to give thanks to God, who gave us the four Gospels as a gift and gave us the Bible, the word of God, in our native language.

/This concludes the 4th lecture on "An Introduction to the New Testament."