

Dear everyone, greetings.

This week's Worldview b edition is much shorter than those that have come out in the past couple of months. I am writing about the Gospels. The Gospels are edited in a beautiful way, and in the editing we see evidence of Spirit-led purpose and intentionality. The editing itself carries a message, e.g. the sandwich constructions of Mark's Gospel, over and above the actual teachings of Jesus and narratives themselves. Today I want to focus on the theological inclusions of the Gospels. These are opening / closing ideas that form "bookends" for the Gospels, and the message for us today.

Matthew. Matthew begins with 1.23 ("...and they shall name Him Emmanuel, which means 'God with us'"). This promise of "God with us" is reflected in the Great Commission with the final promise of Jesus in 28.20 ("and remember, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"). The Gospel begins with the promise of God with us, and concludes with Jesus' promise to always be with His disciples as they serve Him, even to the ends of the world. For us today, this is a beautiful promise. We are never alone. He is always with us and knows exactly what we are going through and what we are going to face. Praise God!

Mark. The first disciple called by name is Peter, a fisherman, and together with his brother Andrew he is given the promise by Jesus that He (Jesus) will turn Peter into a "fisher of men" (1.16-17). At the end of the Gospel there are 2 possible endings. Many manuscripts end with 16.8, but many also include 16.9-20. In the manuscripts that end with 16.8, we read as follows. "And all that had been commanded them they told briefly to those around Peter. And afterward Jesus Himself sent out through them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation." Mark is viewed traditionally as being the eye-witness account of Peter, written in Rome by John Mark, his companion in his last years. It includes the story of Peter's denial of Jesus at His trial, and also of Jesus' rebuke of Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" These are stories that don't reflect well on a proud man, but they do reflect in their telling the depth of Peter's fall from bombast and restoration by Jesus. For us today, the emphasis on Peter at the beginning and very end of this Gospel reminds us that God works through broken and fallen human beings, those who maybe were once full of their own self-sufficiency, but who have realized their depth of brokenness, and who have experienced God's gracious restoration.

Luke. Luke's first teachings of Jesus are when He was 12 in the temple. His parents had assumed He was with them and started out to Nazareth without Him. After 3 days, they realized Jesus wasn't with them, so they headed back to Jerusalem to find Him. They eventually found Him in the temple, where He explained that "it is necessary" for me to about my Father's business. At the end of the Gospel, another 2 people were leaving Jerusalem, and once again they were without Jesus. Like His parents, they didn't know where He was, for there were rumors of a resurrection, but nobody knew for sure, and like His parents, a time lapse of 3 days had passed since they had last seen Jesus. Eventually, Jesus appears, and reveals to them that "it is necessary" for the Messiah to suffer and then enter into His glory. For us today, we may assume that the Jesus we know is still with us, and may be well into life or work's journey....and then after a period of time we realize He is not with us. We no longer sense His presence. Eventually, we find Him again, but it is not the same Jesus we were last with – He has changed, and in His change comes a change and deepening of understanding for ourselves. Times of unwitting and unintended separation can lead to a deeper and richer understanding of His purpose for us when we reconnect.

John. The prologue of John's Gospel (1.1-18) contains some of the richest Christology to be found in Scripture. It resonates with creation imagery, for instance, "In the beginning" not only parallels Gen 1.1,

God's initial act of creation, now to be replicated in His acts of recreation for His fallen children, but the phrase "en arche" is identical in the Septuagint Greek as for Gen 1.1. John 1.1-18 is rich in creation imagery. At the end of the Gospel, Mary Magdalene goes to the garden, to the garden tomb, and discovers an angelic presence in the garden. Turning, she spoke with someone she assumed was the gardener, only to discover that it was Jesus Himself. John 20 echoes the creation story, where Jesus was in the Garden of Eden, and breathed life into Adam's lifeless body in the initial act of creation, and He has now returned to a garden to breathe new life into His new creation – the Body of Christ. For us today, there is the promise of re-creation, that paradise once lost will one day be restored, that our perishable / corruptible / disease-ridden / death-decaying bodies will be changed, in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, and we will be imperishable / incorruptible / disease and suffering will be no more / and death, the old enemy, will be cast into the lake of fire. Many of us bear the scars, cuts, bruises and manifestations of decay in our earthly bodies, yet through Jesus, we have the promise of re-creation into glorious, unfallen bodies and beings, and we will be restored in the New Heavens and the New Earth to the original paradise, or 4-walled garden, that God originally intended for us.

There is much more we can say on these topics, but this is sufficient for tonight. In all of these "inclusios" for the Gospels, Jesus is the center of all, and He is the source of divine blessings. May our worship of Him during the coming Sabbath hours bring joy to the watching universe and peace to our hearts.

Best wishes,

Conrad.