

“Introduction and Narrative” Pt 4

How to Study the Bible

Various Scriptures

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June 10, 2022

Jeff: Our gracious heavenly Father, we thank You and we bow before You this morning. Lord, we thank You for another evening of rest. And Father, as we gather ourselves for the morning we look forward to it with joy knowing that Christ lives and reigns. And our circumstances may be such that we don't have much cause for joy. And yet we always know that there is reason in Christ Jesus. And so Father, as we face the day we ask that Your hand would be upon us for good. And we pray that You would stir up within us the joy that You have put within us, that seed of joy which is indeed Your salvation.

And Father, we pray that as we study Your word which You've preserved for us for our comfort and for our joy, and for the mutual benefit of those within Your body and for the propagation of the truth, we come before You thanking You for the opportunity to study it. We recognize that in our world not everyone has this opportunity to do so freely, to gather like we do on Friday mornings, let alone Sunday. And Lord, we're thankful for that. And we pray, Lord, that You will bless us in our time together, strengthen us, and cause the fruit of our study to grow up in us such that it overflows into our lives, so that what we study is not simply abstract and distant from us, but close up and personal such that people recognize it and are benefited by it.

Lord, we certainly pray for our brother Kevin, and we're thankful for his presence here over the years and for his profession of faith. And Lord, we pray for him and ask that You would cause him to grow, and that You would cause him to grow through this difficulty that he's facing.

Father, we also pray for our brother Bruce and for Becky especially. We ask that You will be with Becky as she faces surgery and recovery, and certainly to be with Bruce as he is to be put into an assisted care facility. And we just ask that You'll preserve them both and strengthen them. And Lord, even as they face these days where they'll be physically apart from one another we pray that their hearts will be knit together with joy and love for one another. And Lord, we pray that You'll be with us as we study Your word, and as we study how to study Your word, for we ask it in Jesus' blessed and precious name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: All right; let's get back at it. And one of the things that we thought about the last time was narrative. And I said to you that when we come to a narrative portion of Scripture we come to a portion of Scripture that really encompasses a great deal of what the Scriptures are. We find it in Genesis. We find it in the history books of Kings and Chronicles. We find it in the book of Acts and the Gospels. We find it in the Old and in the New Testaments.

And we find it really mixed in with other genres. For instance we think about the prophetic genre being its own type or its own sort of literature. When you think about, say, Isaiah, there are historical narratives even in the book of Isaiah. And there are historical narratives in the other prophets as well, at least in the Major Prophets—

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sometimes in the Minor Prophets; it’s a little hard to see—but clearly so in the other types of genres.

And I said to you before that the way in which we need to look at a story or look at a narrative is by weaving it into its context. Now this raises the question of how one does look at a story, say, within the book of Isaiah. For instance one might look at a historical narrative and see that okay, here’s this story plopped in there. But on either side of it I’ve got prophecy. How do I understand that? Well I’m going to talk to you about that when we get to the prophecy genre.

But for right now, when you look at a typical narrative you look at that which comes around it. You try to determine its context, and we looked at that the last time.

So the second thing that we’re going to think about as we look at narratives is that we’re going to look at introductions and conclusions. One of the things that you’ll notice when you look at narratives is that oftentimes you’ll have an introduction to them and a conclusion. And sometimes it’s rather pointed and striking.

So for instance let me take you to Matthew’s Gospel for just a minute. In Matthew’s Gospel we’ll see some of this. So in Matthew’s Gospel we really have a book of genealogy. And then we have this account of Jesus’ birth. And that in and of itself is fascinating when you think about an introduction. But we’ll think about that in just a minute.

But in the latter part of Matthew’s account of Jesus’ birth you have this statement in verse 23: *“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son. And they shall call His name Immanuel, which means ‘God with us.’”*

Now the fascinating thing about that statement is that if you go to the end of Matthew’s Gospel in chapter 28, this is when Jesus is on the mountain in Galilee. He’s about ready to ascend into the heavens. And He says this; these are His final words to His disciples. And I’m going to cut in the middle of these; we’ll start in verse 18 and jump down to verse 20: *“Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

So Immanuel, who is God with us—that is, Jesus—that’s what we’re told in the beginning of Matthew’s Gospel. At the end of Matthew’s Gospel before He ascends into heaven He reiterates who He is. He doesn’t say again “I’m Immanuel.” But He certainly tells us what Immanuel is and how it applies to Him. *“I am with you always”*; *“I am Immanuel.”* And so it begins with an affirmation that Jesus is God who is with us always. And it ends with an affirmation that God is with us always.

For instance, you might also look in Luke’s Gospel for just a minute. In Luke’s Gospel one of the things that you find is, you find a striking beginning, four verses. And it’s basically a start in the Gospels that’s different from the other Gospels. In the other Gospels, for instance in Matthew, we find that we have this genealogy and this shorter piece that tells us about Jesus’ birth. And then in Mark’s Gospel we find a one-statement introduction; I’ll say something about that in just a minute. And then in John we find 18 verses of prologue.

But in Luke’s Gospel we find something entirely different. In Luke’s Gospel in the first four verses we find basically not a theological introduction like the prologue, not an introduction that ties us back to the creation account, as Matthew’s does, not even a one-sentence introduction like Mark’s Gospel which sets Jesus off from the current emperor.

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But what we find is, we find that “this is how I chose to write.” In other words, “this is my research; this is what it entailed. And this is what I’m planning to do with the research that I’ve engaged in.”

And so he says: *“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.”*

Now one of the things that I want you to notice is that word *compile*. *“Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative.”* To compile basically has a wide variety of meanings. But one of its meanings can be to tell orally. In other words, as many have undertaken to tell orally, to speak orally, a narrative account of what happened in the life of Jesus the wonderful things that have been said, and so on.

Now why is that important? That’s important because I’m going to enter into just a little bit of liberalism for just a minute here.

Don Maurer: Uh-oh!

Jeff: Oh yeah; I know it, Don. *(Laughter)* I know, I know. So for instance in liberal circles, one of the things that you discover is this. You discover that here is Jesus at this point in time. And then what the liberals will say is something like this. What began to develop were things like forms of sayings—little sayings of Jesus, okay?—just little stories, little one-liners—those kinds of things.

So then, by the time you get to the Gospel writers, you have them taking these little forms, these little snippets, and then putting them together, and really putting them together in such a way that is really not a memory account of Jesus’ life, but a really useful account. In other words, how do we make these things useful in the church?

And then you get the writing of the Gospel. And then you either get the writing of the Gospel or the writing of the Gospel plus a redactor or an editor. In other words Matthew may have been the first one to put these things together. But they really take their final form by some sort of editor or redactor who comes later.

Now what that basically means is this. It basically means that the Gospel of Matthew—let’s take Matthew, for instance—the Gospel of Matthew is not an accurate record of Jesus’ life. But Matthew is a useable document that was created by the church with some remembrances of Jesus’ life. It’s really a useful document.

Now what do I mean by that? Let’s take Matthew 18, for example. Some will say that it was Matthew or Matthew’s redactors or later editors, because some of these guys are going to say that Matthew wasn’t completed until the second century. Wow, that’s late when you think about Gospel dates! So Matthew or his later editors were in a church that was having some difficulties and trouble, and so they needed to deal with that trouble.. How were they going to deal with that trouble? Well, the best way to deal with that trouble was to take the words of your Founder and to have Him address the problem.

And so for instance in Matthew 18 what do you find Jesus saying? You find Jesus saying that if there are two people and they’re having trouble with one another, this is how they deal with it. Now here’s the problem with that. What does Jesus say at the end of that instruction? He says, “If they don’t listen then take it to the church.” And the

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liberals say that there was no church back in the day Jesus was writing. And so this is evidence that there's a later redactor who was making Matthew a useful Gospel, or a manual if you will, about how to deal with problems in the church.

Did Jesus say this? Maybe, maybe not. But who really cares? This is a redactor who is basically using Jesus' words, whether He said them or not, to deal with a current problem in His church.

Now that's a liberal way of thinking about the Gospels. And so, for instance, you find people like N. T. Wright talking about post-Resurrection accounts of Jesus that really have no root in His life. Those are problems. When you read those kinds of people those are problems. If you believe in an infallible, inerrant word of God those are real problems.

Now why do I bring this up? Because, for instance, in Luke in his introduction one of the things that he tells us is that there have been those who have been trying to give an oral narrative of what has happened. Now he decides he's going to do it.

Now if you put Jesus about 30, and you put Mark about 50, and you put Matthew somewhere roughly in the 60s, what do you have? You really have maybe thirty years, okay?

Now one of the things that you find when you read the Gospels is that you read what Luke is talking about: witnesses. He's saying to you that these are from eyewitnesses.

Now why is that important? Well, it's one thing that we don't really give much thought to. For instance, have you ever wondered why there are so many names in the New Testament? There are names in the Gospels—for instance Simon of Cyrene. And there are other names—women's names and so on—little ones that just appear and disappear. And some Gospels repeat those names and some Gospels don't. And in fact, as you get later in the Gospel accounts, names drop out.

Why is that? Well I'll tell you why that is. It's because the way they did history back then—and you can prove this by looking at Pappius's statements and Jerome's statements about how history was done; how good history was done. Good history was done by checking with an eyewitness.

That's counter-intuitive to what we do today. When we think about doing history we've got to wait and let a hundred years go by before we can really have a neutral position on history, and so write about a story that's happened, or write about a figure in history and his influence. That's not the way historiography was done in the first century. In the first century the best historiography, the best history, was done by finding an eyewitness or being an eyewitness to the event yourself and then writing about it.

And so one of the things that we find is that there are these lists of eyewitnesses, and the reason for that was this; it was very simple. They were saying, “Go ask, and you'll find these things to be true.”

Why do some of the eyewitnesses drop out in the later Gospels? Because they're dead, or they couldn't be located anymore. I mean, that's the general sense of why the eyewitnesses are present and why they drop out as later Gospels develop, because they were written around their historiography. The best history was done by eyewitnesses.

Now that's what you find. For instance you turn to 1 Corinthians 15. And Paul says, “There are plenty of eyewitnesses to this.” It's like he's saying, “Go ask them. They'll tell you this is true.”

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Now obviously you are going to run out of eyewitnesses. And so these things were written down so that when a time came where the eyewitnesses are all dead you had an account of it. And that’s what you have with the Gospels.

And so when we look at Luke’s introduction it’s a very powerful introduction. Mark’s introduction is a one-line introduction. *“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”*

There’s a quote from an inscription of Octavian. Octavian was the very first emperor in imperial Rome. And when you look at his inscription it looks just like this. In fact it talks about Octavian’s gospel—the good news of Octavian. And so with one line Mark is trying to set Jesus over against any earthly king. Sometimes that escapes us because we don’t know that background and that context, and yet it’s very much there.

So introductions and conclusions are very much a part of narratives. In fact, when you look in Genesis oftentimes after one story winds up a little seed will be dropped, indicating what’s going to happen in the next story, and so on—all kinds of introductions and conclusions when you come to think about narratives. Sometimes the challenge—and sometimes the wonderful challenge—is trying to find where these kinds of things begin and end.

Go with me to Luke’s Gospel for just a minute. I find that Luke’s Gospel is one of the most challenging pieces to find beginnings and endings of particular stories. For instance, when you look at what’s called a pericope, when you study the Bible, one of the things that you’ll do is, you’ll study a particular passage if you’re not studying a whole book. And pericope means to cut around. So what you’re doing is, you’re studying a section of text.

Now how do you determine where that text begins and how that story ends in a narrative account? How do you determine that? Well, sometimes it’s easy and sometimes it’s not so easy.

For instance, in Luke’s account, if you look with me at Luke chapter 9, this is really difficult. And why is it difficult? In 9:1-6 you have the story about Jesus sending out the disciples to heal and to preach the gospel. But notice that in verses 7-9 you have these questions by Herod. And then look at verse 10. On their return the apostles told Him what they had done. So the narrative account includes the account of Herod’s questions.

Why? Well, it’s really fascinating when you think about it, because verse 10 could have come before verse 7. “On their return, they—And oh, by the way, Herod was asking all these questions.” But Luke wants us to understand that we ought to see Herod’s questions involved with this account.

Why is that? I mean, that’s a question that you’ve got to ask yourself. And then this; this is really the striking thing. The striking thing is that Herod’s questions are mirrored by Jesus in 18-20 of the same chapter. *“Who do the crowds say that I am?”*

Now we’re re-visiting something that we saw earlier in the chapter. Herod had questions about Jesus’ identity. Now Jesus is asking questions about his own identity, right? And then here’s the interesting thing. I think that when you look at this account one of the things that you have to realize is that it’s the Transfiguration account that brings these things together and pulls them together. Why? Because it’s the Transfiguration where the Voice from heaven drops down and actually identifies Jesus. So it’s Herod

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asking questions. It’s Jesus asking the disciples about the crowds. And then it’s God saying, “I’ll tell you who this is.”

So all of a sudden we have a larger pericope. When we think about it, the boundaries of it really extend over quite a number of verses. And yet we could actually divide it up a bit, couldn’t we? We could divide it up and we could take some sections out of this larger context and say, “Yes, but what’s going on in some of the smaller sections here?”

For instance, we might take verses 1-10 of Chapter 9 and just look through it and say, okay. What’s the point of Jesus’ question here? Not His question, but what’s the point of sending them out?

Or the feeding of the five thousand. What’s the point of His question there? What’s the point of His question? You know, His question is really not a question; it’s really a statement. “*You give them something to eat.*” But is there a question that lies behind that statement? I think there may be. What is that question?

Well, it’s an interesting question when you begin to think about bread in Luke’s Gospel. But now we’re thinking about word studies, and so we’ll get to that. But you get the idea. Okay, any questions or thoughts about that? Yes?

Bob Busted: I’m just wondering; back to this eyewitness situation. What about the value of the grandfather telling the son, “This is what I saw; this is what I heard.”

Jeff: Yeah.

Bob: And hopefully the son passes it on to his child, and so forth. The story probably gets changed a bit. But what’s the value of that process in this eyewitness discussion?

Jeff: Yes; it’s a great question. Nowadays I think there is less value placed on the eyewitness. And there’s a certain familial value placed on “Granddad told me, and now I’m telling you.” There’s a certain familial value of stories passed down.

But for instance, when you read a history book one of the things that you don’t find in a scholarly history is that you don’t find eyewitness accounts being referenced very often, if at all. Sometimes you do. But it’s rarely that you find that this is from a recording, right?

So for instance, in the R. C. Sproul biography Stephen Nichols will sometimes say, “This is taken from a recording of R. C. Sproul,” right? This is his remembrance. And yet, when you think about scholarly histories, the value of the eyewitness goes way, way, way down, because they just don’t have any kind of trust that the eyewitness is going to remember it well.

Now that kind of conflicts a bit with an eyewitness on the witness stand, because we value an eyewitness on the witness stand. And so if you want to read this it’s kind of a scholarly treatment. It’s called *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*. He takes all of this and he actually addresses these different things. And he has a section on eyewitnesses on the witness stand. And he basically concludes that an eyewitness is a generally reliable person. And so that builds into his case about historiography done in the first century.

Now that’s kind of under-valued. But it has its value, and we value it in a variety of ways. We value it in terms of family—Granddad passing on stories. We value it in our court system. We value it in a variety of different contexts, and we should. But historians have gotten away from valuing eyewitness accounts.

Bob: I reference that because last night in the committee report on the insurrection—

Jeff: Oh yeah!

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Bob: They based a lot of evidences on police testimony and on this video biographer and his testimony. And now not only do they have the eyewitness of the event, but now it’s recorded; it’s officially on paper.

Jeff: Yes, for the record.

Bob: You can follow it fifty years from now or a hundred years from now if you want to.

Jeff: Yes. Anybody else? Rich, you look like you’re thinking about it. No?

Rich Clark: My wife and I have been witnessing to this lady. She’s in her 70s and she wants to be an atheist.

Jeff: She wants to be?

Rich: Well on the one hand she says she is. But with other words she says, “I thank God for this,” or “I thank You” in prayer; she’s very conflicted. But she’s telling us, “You know, the Gospels were written thirty years after Christ. How can they be true?” But just one example. If I saw some dude walking on water I don’t care if it was sixty years ago; I’d remember it.

Jeff: Yes, but here are a couple of other things to think about. First of all I agree with you 100%. First of all, remember that the authors who wrote these say that Jesus told us that the Spirit would bring to our remembrance the things that He said and did. So not only do we have our memory, but we have Jesus saying, “The Spirit I give you will bring remembrance.” That’s another one.

There’s another one when you think about it. You know, somebody was just telling me the other day. He said, “I think that the author of the Old Testament had ADD.”

I said, “Why do you say that?” (*Laughter*)

He said, “Read a narrative and notice how many times a person is named. They think that we can’t read from one sentence to the next and say, ‘Oh, it’s the same guy.’”

And I said, “Yes, but you have to remember that this isn’t a written culture. They didn’t take their Bibles home and read them. This is an oral culture.” So when you’re speaking you speak in a different way. Or when you write you write in a way that is different from an orally based culture, right?

So for instance, when you look at this—and it’s not just the Old Testament; it’s the Greek New Testament—when you look at the Greek New Testament it’s not translated all the time like it is in the Greek. Why? Because in Greek the same words are often used. And in our English translations the translators had good English teachers who said, “Don’t use the same word over and over,” right? And so they don’t. And so they’ll use synonyms that fit into that range of meaning for that word. But it makes it more interesting and lively for us to read because we’re a written-based culture.

But if you were an oral-based culture you’d be driving on the same word over and over and over again. Why? So that people would go home and remember. “What did he talk about?” “Well, I can tell you what he talked about. I heard that word seventeen times,” right?

So I think those things are important to keep in mind when we think about the Scriptures. We think about them in an oral-based culture. I hate to say it, but they would have had a better memory than we would, right? You have Jesus saying, “I’m going to bring these things to your remembrance”; there’s a supernatural element. Just all of these things and then others; we just don’t have a tendency to think of it. This is to her

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comment that they were written thirty years after Jesus, and so on. Okay, so anything else?

Don Rimbey: How do we know? You say they were written in the first century; you said thirty years. How do we know that they weren't—

Jeff: How do we know what?

Don: That they weren't more recent, more current? (*Unclear*)

Jeff: The dating of the Gospels is oftentimes with a subjectivity that goes into that. But it's interesting when you think about it. It's always the case when you get into more liberal scholarship, it's always later. I think that when you get into guys who are on the right side of things they want to prove that it's always a little earlier. I think that when you just get into the general idea of scholarship out there, I think that it's probably always a more balanced approach. Right now Mark in the consensus has the priority of being the first Gospel. His is in the '50s. His is actually moved from the '60s. Now the consensus is that he probably wrote sometime in the '50s, and so it's really less than thirty years after the appearance of Christ.

Don: It's not the fact that we have manuscripts that say, “Printed in 100 A.D.”

Jeff: That's right.

Don: So it's pretty much subjective.

Jeff: There is a subjectivity to it. For instance, there was a time when we didn't have any first-century manuscripts. And so you had guys like F. C. Bauer who were basically saying that Christianity was an invention of Paul and Peter. And then Luke comes along and tries to reconcile the tension between the two of them by writing Acts.

And so you get a guy by the name of Titiendorf who comes along. And he becomes something like the Indiana Jones of textual criticism. He sets out to look for earlier texts. He doesn't find any earlier texts. But later textual critics do find earlier texts. And so now we do have texts that are in the first century. And so it's kind of an exciting thing, which I think in some ways does help the dating process, but still puts it in and remains in a level of subjectivity. Yes, Don?

Don Maurer: I think what Don was asking there is how do we know that the Gospels weren't written in 40 A.D. or 45, rather than the '50s or '60s?

Jeff: Unless we found one that we could date to that time I don't think we can really say.

Don: But it doesn't say dates.

Jeff: That's right.

Don: So how do we know?

Jeff: That's a difficult issue; how do we know? Do you know what I mean? So for instance, when you have a Gospel written like Mark, how do you date other books when you don't really know? How do you date the book of Hebrews? When you don't have a date how do you date it? Well, one of the ways you date it is that you say, well, here's a guy that continues to talk about the temple as if it's still standing. So here's an internal indication that the temple must still be standing, and so this is prior to 70 A.D. You know, that kind of process of elimination.

So for instance some people have said that Mark was written in the '60s. Now if it's written in the '60s, it's striking in what may and may not be there. For instance, this is

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where it brings in the element of subjectivity. Let’s say it’s written in the ‘60s. Let’s say it’s written sort of in the early-to mid-‘60s.

What would have been happening? Well, in July of 64 A.D. Rome burned, right? And Mark doesn’t seem to allude to that at all.

Now it’s a biography about Jesus, so we might not expect him to. However, there is something very fascinating when you think about a ‘60s date. And that is that he begins with that line, “This is the gospel of Jesus Christ.” The gospel is not a religious term; the gospel is very much a political term. And so this is the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the good news of Jesus the Anointed, the Christ, the King, right?

Now that’s pretty fascinating when you think about Rome being in the midst of turmoil. That’s a fascinating introductory statement. Now does that prove that Mark is trying to make a statement when Rome is in turmoil under Nero? Not really. But it’s suggestive.

Could it be that Mark was written in the ‘50s before any kind of turmoil took place? Of course it could be; that sort of thing. Oftentimes though, because of the view that Mark had priority, and with the dating of Matthew and Luke, Mark does seem to be pushed back into the ‘60s, even into the ‘50s. But that’s because of the view that Mark has priority. And you see that because Matthew and Luke both borrow from Mark, so Mark has to predate them. There are these reasons.

Sig Tragard: Wouldn’t it be to your point that it would be like when Luke says that he’s taken the time to compile. So what documents he might have found or eyewitnesses he might have talked to weren’t on the day he set out to write out the whole Gospel.

Jeff: Yeah.

Sig: It might have taken months. And he found evidence of things years prior to that.

Jeff: Well, that’s the thing. I would say that probably, because he’s talking about “*eyewitnesses and ministers*”, he’s not talking years. I think he’s probably dealing with eyewitnesses to some degree.

Sig: Eyewitnesses from when Christ was here.

Jeff: Yes. And again it couldn’t be years.

Sig: Yeah. I mean, my point was just that it’s a compilation, like any author would do.

Jeff: Yeah.

Sig: He’s writing in 2022, but his research took him back to 1910, or whatever.

Jeff: Yes. See, this is the interesting thing. When you look at the early church fathers, one of the things that you discover is, you discover that Mark’s Gospel, if you trust the apostolic fathers, you discover that Mark’s Gospel is really Peter’s Gospel. Mark is really the amanuensis or the secretary for Peter. And so some will say that Mark’s Gospel is really the sermons of Peter—like he says here, “*eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word.*” So Mark is writing down what he heard from Peter; it’s interesting.

Okay. So we don’t just think about introductions and conclusions; you think about authorial comments. In other words, what about the author? What is he saying? Well, take a couple of these, for instance. Let’s stay with Mark: Mark chapter 5 verse 41.

“Taking her by the hand He said to her, ‘Talitha cummi,’ which means, ‘Little girl, I say to you, arise!’ And immediately the girl got up and began to walk, for she was twelve years of age. And they were immediately overcome with amazement.”

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Now I just want you to think about those kinds of things. Here you have a couple of things that are striking. First of all Mark has some significant little things in his Gospel account. And it does kind of put to your mind that this could well be Peter’s remembrances.

For instance, the perfume spreads throughout the room with the woman who anoints His feet with oil. Mark talks about Him lying on a cushion in the stern of the ship. Here he talks about taking her by the hand, and this is what He said to her. Peter would have been there, right? *“And immediately the girl got up.”* And then this parenthetical phrase: *“For she was twelve years old.”* All of these little things are authorial comments. You have to say to yourself, what seems to be eyewitness here that provides a fuller account and puts flesh on the bones of the story that are from the author?

It’s like this. Years ago I used to do genealogy work. And I could find names galore from my family. But I could not find any stories. And finally my friend who was in his 70s or 80s who did genealogy all of his life, told me this. He said, “What you have to do is, you have to get church records. You have to dig very deep and hard to put flesh on these bones.”

Well one of the things that I would say to you is that we don’t have bare stories in the Gospels. We have these authorial comments that are there for us that put flesh on the bones, in other words that don’t just tell us the story. But when Mark tells us that the entire room was filled with perfume, all of a sudden you realize there’s a sensory aspect to the telling of the story that fills it out for me a bit more.

Or how about this? The simple form is explanatory. Look in Mark again. Just listen to how the preposition “for” explains the story in the narrative. 1:16: *“Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee He saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.”* It’s just a small little commentary. It starts a prepositional phrase. And the prepositional phrase fills out part of the story for us.

Why was He targeting these guys? Who were they? Well, they were fishermen, okay?

Or how about 1:22? *“And they were astonished at His teaching.”* Why were they astonished at His teaching? A little prepositional phrase starting with “for”: *“For He taught them as One who had authority.”* That’s why they were astonished.

How about 2:15? *“And as He reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and His disciples.”* Why? *“For there were many who followed Him.”* And it’s just on and on and on. You find little explanatory phrases that add a significant little dimension to the story if we just pay attention. Sometimes it’s a relative clause; sometimes it’s a prepositional phrase. But sometimes those little phrases just provide for us an added layer even if it’s a small one—an added layer for interpretation of the Scriptures.

How about this? How about theological clarifications? Look at 7:19 of Mark’s Gospel; you find these in places. Jesus is teaching them about what defiles a person. I’m going to start in the middle of the verse: *“Since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled.”* Look at the parenthetical phrase: *“(Thus He declared all foods clean.)”* A little parenthetical phrase, a theological clarification.

Now think about that. We typically don’t think about that theological clarification until it comes in Acts chapter 10 with Peter. But Mark is telling us here that Jesus is declaring all foods clean in Mark 7.

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Now when you think about Peter being the source of Mark’s Gospel and Peter being the source of the story in Acts chapter 10, it’s fascinating when you think about it. So it’s theological clarification.

Or 8:35 is another one. I don’t think that’s right. I think I’m in the wrong verse down there.

Don Maurer: What were you thinking of?

Jeff: I don’t know what I was thinking of. How about repetition in narrative? I want you to think about Ruth for just a second. In Ruth 1:6-22 the word for “return” is used 11 times in 6-22. Now it’s not always translated that way in the English. But it is that way in the Hebrew. And what is it that the author is trying to tell us about Ruth? Ruth is returning.

But there’s a theological meaning to that word. That word is used for repentance. When someone returns he returns physically, geographically. But when they return spiritually they return from something to something. Here is a woman who is returning from the land of curse to Bethlehem, the land of bread. And so she’s engaged not only in a geographical turn, but she’s engaged in a spiritual turn. So there’s a sense in which we find repetition being very important.

In Genesis 1:1 you find repetition—something simple like the repetition of days, or in Genesis 5 there’s a repetition: “*And he died.*” “And he died. And he died,” right? And what is he trying to drive home? He’s trying to drive home that this is the fruit of the curse of Genesis chapter 3.

Or there’s repetition that comes cyclically. For instance in Judges 3:7-9 a pattern that you’re going to see repeated in the rest of the book—rebellion, retribution, repentance and restoration. You can make that a little wider if you want in terms of the circle, or a little more narrow. I don’t know how much more narrow you can make it. But the idea is that’s the pattern that’s set up orally in the book of Judges, and then it repeats. And so look for this pattern, because this pattern is going to happen over and over and over again.

And then dialogue often happens in stories. This is the crazy thing. Sometimes the presence of dialogue is important; sometimes the absence of dialogue is important.

For instance, here’s the interesting thing. Turn to Luke 7 again. Now one of the things that you realize is this. One of the things that you realize is that Jesus has just finished preaching the sermon. Look at 6:27. “*Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you.*” Look at verse 32. “*If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you?*”

Here we find the centurion in chapter 7. And the Jews say, “He loves us. He built our synagogue.” But the Jews actually hate him. Why? Because he’s a Gentile.

Sig: He’s so gracious too.

Jeff: Yes. So listen to this. Here’s an application of Jesus’ sermon that happened in chapter 6. “*I say to you: Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you.*” Right? So here’s the Gentile who loves those who hate him.

But look at verse 32. “*If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you?*” Here the Jews are saying to Jesus, “Do something good for him. He loves us; he built our synagogue.” And Jesus is saying, “*If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you?*”

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So here you find a Gentile actually following the sermon, and the Jews actually outside of the parameters of the sermon.

Now that’s fascinating because you have this dialogue taking place in the centurion story. But then you have this woman from Nain who comes up. She doesn’t say a word. There’s not one shred of dialogue in that story, and she’s a Jew. And all of a sudden you realize that something is going on here. There’s a Gentile and there’s lots of dialogue. If we trace it back to chapter 6 he seems to be following the sermon Jesus preached. But the Jew is speechless. And in fact there’s something at the end of that story. They glorified God, not Jesus. We’re told that they glorified Jesus earlier. *“They glorified God, saying, ‘A great Prophet has arisen among us.’”*

The centurion believed and was saved. The Jews think that only a great Prophet had arisen among them. That’s a fascinating thing when you think about it. When you think about dialogue, what does the dialogue indicate? Where does it lead in my thinking?

How about this: the identity of structures. In a narrative there is usually a problem, a turning point, and then a resolution or a conclusion. And you just look for those kinds of things.

And then lastly I would say this to you. How can you see Jesus? How do you see Jesus in the text? Is He promised in the text? Is He prophesied about in the text? Is He a principle typified in the text? Is He a penalty bearer that is symbolized in the text? In other words, how is it that I see Christ in the text?

So in the narrative form these are the things that I think about and that I look for. These are indicators that I try to latch onto as I’m going through the text.

I would just reiterate something that we talked about last time. When you try to think about the context of the text the five w questions are great. Who said what? What did they say? Why did they say it? Where did they say it and when did they say it? When you think about dialogue, or when you think about what’s happening and transpiring in the text, those are great for determining what the context is.

Well, that’s all. I realize that we finished that hurriedly. But I didn’t want to spend yet another week on narrative. So we’ll move to the next one next time. But if you have any questions about this we’ll come back and you can ask. But otherwise we’ll move to the next item. All right; let’s pray, unless you have any questions really quick before we stop. Yes?

Mike Davis: Did Rich call Jesus a dude a little while ago?

Jeff: Well, I’m pretty sure he did, but I was trying to gloss. *(Laughter)* I was trying to gloss over that. You know, that’s when you just drink your coffee. *(Laughter)*

You know, I want to tell you something. You know you’ve moved into another age bracket when you’re at the gym. And they used to say to you, “Hey man, you done with that?” And now they say, “Sir, are you finished?” *(Laughter)* You know what I mean? The first time that happened I came home and told that to my wife, and I said, “I’m no longer a dude.” *(Laughter)* All right.

Father in heaven, we thank You for this day. We pray that You’ll bless it to us. We thank You for Your word. Lord, help us to understand it more and more. And we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.