

Two Missions: Part 4: The Family of Jesus

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Lesson 115

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Two Missions: Petrine and Pauline

- There was a *feud* between in early Christianity between the Jerusalem Church (lead by Peter, James, and John), and the one led by Paul
- The key issue was whether *Christians must obey the Jewish Law*
 - Paul agreed Gentile Christians should obey Jewish moral laws, but objected to obedience to the ceremonial laws such as eating kosher meat and circumcision
- Paul believed that the Jerusalem's church's insistence on the law nullified salvation through the crucifixion of Jesus, and so he repeatedly refers to it as “another gospel”
- Galatians is an angry epistle responding to this issue

Agenda

- Today we will look further at the feud between Paul and the Jerusalem church leaders
- We will look at the overall situation in which Paul's epistles were written
- We will examine how the debate between the two missions affected the gospel writers' treatment of Jesus' family
 - The way each gospel writer wrote about the family of Jesus reveals his sympathies in the debate between the two missions
- Note: All the material in this lesson comes from St. Paul vs St. Peter: A Tale of Two Missions by Michael Goulder
- As we will see references to 'Peter, James, and John' quite often, for brevity, I will sometimes abbreviate this trio as PJ&J

Reading Different Biblical Books

- Unfortunately, most Christians think of the Bible as an all inclusive, straightforward exposition of all we need to know about Christianity and that all of it should be read literally
- This is not the case
- The Bible contains many different types of literature; each should be interpreted based on the type of literature the author used
 - Thus the way to read one book in the Bible may differ from how another should be read
 - In our OT study, we saw that even a single book , even a single paragraph, is sometimes comprised of texts from up to three different authors, each writing to refute some of what had been written previously!
 - Gross misinterpretation results when non-literal passages are mixed with literal passages from another author

Reading Paul's Epistles

- Paul's epistles, except for Romans, are written to address specific problems that churches he had founded earlier were having
 - So we must not draw conclusions as to what Paul is saying that are too broad or universal
- We only have one side of the communication between Paul and his churches
 - Since we do not have the letters from the churches to Paul, we do not always have a clear explanation of what the problems are that Paul is writing about
 - The problems Paul writes about must therefore be inferred from Paul's answers about them
 - This sometimes requires the expertise of modern biblical scholarship, without which people may misunderstand

Goulder's Methods

- Goulder employs several methods in analyzing biblical texts
- One he calls the “*loyalty test*”
 - The idea is that the sympathy of a biblical author will indicate which of the two missions (PJ&J or Paul) that the writer prefers
- Another he calls the “*emphatic negative*”
 - This means that whatever is repeatedly denied by someone must be asserted by someone else
 - To me, this is just “reading between the lines”
- *We do not have the full communication between Paul and his churches, so we must infer what others are saying from Paul's writings*
 - Paul is writing to people who already know the issues

The Debate Affects NT Books

- The feud described in Galatians occurred before 48 CE
- A similar situation occurred in Philadelphia about 117 CE
 - A church is split between Jewish and Gentile Christians and Ignatius writes: “If anyone propounds Judaism to you, do not listen to him...I heard certain people saying ‘If I do not find it in the ancient texts, I do not believe it in the Gospel’”
 - What is the “ancient text”?
- Thus, this conflict between the two missions, of Jewish Christians versus Gentile Christians, lasted for at least 70 years
- And it was during this period of time that the NT books were written; we will see the influence this feud had on them
- The gospels give us *the theology of their authors*, not necessarily what Jesus actually said or did

The Importance of the Debate

- To emphasize just how ferocious the debate was between Jewish Christians and the Gentiles Christians, Goulder states *“both Paul and Ignatius died in partial consequence of the hatred of Jewish Christians; and we shall see that the Paulines, especially St. John, hated the Jewish Christians with an equal ferocity”*
- And as for the importance of understanding the differences between the two camps, Goulder writes *“to understand what those differences were, and why they arose, is to understand the New Testament”*
 - Quite a profound claim!
 - You can decide for yourself after we finish covering Goulder’s evidence, which will require several more lessons

An Example Loyalty Test

- One example of the loyalty test he provides is how Americans speak of Chappaquiddick: obviously it was a terrible event in the life of Ted Kennedy: if a person plays up how horrible it was, you can surmise that that person is probably a Republican who dislikes Kennedy; if someone else admits it was bad but downplays the severity of it somewhat, then they are much more likely to be a Democrat
- So likewise, for a certain story in the Bible, if an author stresses a negative aspect of it, he is probably in one camp, and if he reduces the sting of it, he is probably in the other camp
- Do not be overly concerned with what really happened
 - Much as we would like to know the real truth, often it simply cannot be determined

The family of Jesus, per Mark

- Mark 3:21: “And when his family heard (of Jesus’ success), they went out to *seize* him; for they said, ‘*He is out of his mind.*’”
- Mark 3:31-35: “And his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting round him; and they said to him, Your mother and your brothers are outside asking for you. And he replied, Who are my mother and my brothers? And looking at those sitting round him he said, Here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”
- After Jesus’ preaching in Nazareth is a failure: Mark 6:4 has “A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and *among his own relatives, and in his own house.*”

Now for the Loyalty Test

- At the time the gospels were written, the family of Jesus was in charge of the Jerusalem church
- The three passages in Mark about the family of Jesus are *hostile to members of Jesus' family*
 - They are outsiders, not in his inner circle
 - They think he is mad and try to forcibly stop him
 - They *oppose* what he is doing!
 - He says others are his real brothers and sisters
 - His family is accused of not honoring him
- Goulder points out that it is understandable that Christians are upset by these passages, but stresses *that it is wrong to play down what Mark is saying*
- *See what the story tells us about Mark, not Jesus*

The Loyalty Test for Mark

- *What does the story tell us about Mark?*
 - Goulder claims that these passages were written by Mark to convince his Christian readers that they should disregard the claims and positions of the family of Jesus, the same family who led the Jerusalem church at the time he wrote his gospel
 - So whose side is Mark on?
 - Mark wrote a gospel that, at least in this story, says that *Christians should pay no heed to the family members of Jesus because they did not understand him and Jesus himself did not consider them to be his family* any longer; Jesus said his family is those people who do God's will
 - Mark thus opposes the Jerusalem church
 - *Mark supports Paul*
- This is just one example – we'll see more as we go further

A Brief Digression

- At this point, it is imperative to make a brief digression
- Mark was the first gospel written and is *not* based on any other text in the NT
- Matthew and Luke were the next two gospels written
- Both Matthew and Luke used Mark as a source
- Both Matthew and Luke expanded Mark
- Both Matthew and Luke kept a large percentage of Mark
- *Both Matthew and Luke changed some passages in Mark*, but not too much (Luke more so than Matthew)
- John was written last, and is not dependent on Mark
- In the lecture series on Liturgical Midrash in 2016, we saw why Mark is so short and why it was expanded
 - It had to do with the calendar!

Matthew and Luke

- In expanding Mark, both Matthew and Luke kept Mark as is, except when they objected to certain statements
- Both Matthew and Luke felt free to change the passages in Mark they did not like because they understood that Mark was not recording history as it actually happened
- The authors were instead *writing theologically, not historically*
 - This is an important point the vast majority of Christians do not understand!
 - “*Writing theologically, not historically*” explains the multitude of differences covered in Lessons 102-107
- So imagine Matthew and Luke (separately) reading Mark and deciding what to keep and what to change

The family of Jesus, per Matthew

- Matthew *entirely omits Mark's 'He is out of his mind' verse*
 - The omission of this verse dramatically changes the two passages describing what happens when the family of Jesus arrives where he is
 - *With the omission of Jesus being crazy, the reason for Jesus' family to get to him is entirely changed*
 - Instead of trying to stop him, they merely want to speak to him (Matthew 12:46)
- Matthew keeps Mark's third passage verbatim except for dropping the phrase "and among his own relatives"
 - Matthew 13:57 has "A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country and in his own house."

The Family of Jesus, per Luke

- Like Matthew, Luke *entirely omits Mark's 'He is out of his mind' clause*
 - Again the omission of this clause dramatically changes the two passages describing Jesus and his family
 - Instead of trying to stop him, Luke says “they could not reach him for the crowd” (Luke 8:19)
 - Talk about changing a negative into a positive!
 - Luke has dramatically changed Mark's version
- Luke goes even further than Matthew in Mark's third passage by also dropping the phrase “and in his house.”
 - Luke 4:24 has “Truly I say unto you, no prophet is acceptable in his own country.”

The Loyalty Test for Matthew and Luke

- *What does the story tell us about Matthew and Luke?*
 - Both Matthew and Luke, compared to Mark, are *more friendly to the family of Jesus*
 - This indicates that *they are less bitter to the Jerusalem church* at the time they wrote their gospels (roughly 20-25 years after Mark wrote his gospel)
- This is consistent with Luke's book of Acts, where Peter and the disciples are heroes in the first 12 chapters
- In Acts 15, in describing the determination about whether Gentile Christians should observe Jewish laws, Luke writes that all agree that Paul is correct
 - Luke is on Paul's side theologically, but builds bridges to the PJ&J camp whenever he can for the sake of church unity
 - Luke does not share Mark's animosity toward PJ&J

More to Come

- So far, and we are early in this study, Goulder's claim about where each gospel stands in relationship to the feud between Paul and PJ&J is just an *initial assessment based on one case*
- Nothing has been proved or demonstrated yet
- The tendencies arrived at today will be meaningless unless *more examples produce similar results*
- We will examine more such stories in the next few lessons, and then we will see *whether a consistent picture emerges or not*