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Composition date of the synoptic gospels

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

COMPOSITION DATE OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

by

Jennell Botello

2007

To: Interim Dean Mark Szuchman
College of Arts and Sciences

This thesis, written by Jennell Botello, and entitled Composition Date of the Synoptic Gospels, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

Christine Gudorf

James E. Huchingson

Erik Larson, Major Professor

Date of Defense: June 15, 2007

The thesis of Jennell Botello is approved.

Interim Dean Mark Szuchman
College of Arts and Sciences

Dean George Walker
University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2007

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my mother, whose patience and love knows no limits. Without her understanding and persistence, the completion of this work would have not been possible. Thanks mom!

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS
COMPOSITION DATE OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

by

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The purpose of this research paper is to follow a line of ongoing investigations that discuss dates for the origin of the synoptic gospels and evaluate the arguments for early, late, and intermediate dating and their susceptibility to critique from opposing arguments. There are three principal components in dating theories: (1) data from the Greek in the earliest texts (2) data concerning the provenance of the earliest texts (3) and data from the historical context of the first century.

The study is significant because, contrary to what might be expected, the starting and key point in deciding on a composition date is the Book of Acts of the Apostles. This study compiled and integrated information, in an unbiased fashion, based on reading and researching large numbers of texts by scholars, such as Hengel, who support an earlier dating, as well as those, such as Fitzmyer, who support a later dating.

Furthermore, this study also required knowledge of those scholars who propose dates that do not fall into these main categories. The research demonstrated that by looking at the Book of Acts of the Apostles as the key starting point, the synoptic gospels were most likely composed before 70 CE, therefore, supporting scholars who argue for an earlier date.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
One: Introduction.....	1
Markan Priority.....	2
Composition Timeline.....	4
Two: The Book of the Acts of the Apostles.....	5
Introduction.....	5
Later Dating.....	6
Intermediate Dating.....	8
Earlier Dating.....	12
Conclusion.....	19
Three: The Gospel According to Saint Luke.....	21
Introduction.....	21
Later Dating.....	21
Intermediate Dating.....	23
Earlier Dating.....	32
Conclusion.....	36
Four: The Gospel According to Saint Matthew.....	38
Introduction.....	38
After the Temple's Destruction in 70 CE.....	38
Before the Temple's Destruction in 70 CE.....	45
Conclusion.....	48
Five: The Gospel According to Saint Mark.....	50
Introduction.....	50
Later Dating: After the Destruction of the Temple.....	50
Intermediate Dating: After Saint Peter and Paul's Death.....	54
The Death of Saint Peter and Paul.....	55
External Evidence.....	55
Internal Evidence.....	58
Earlier Dating: Before Saint Peter's Death.....	61
External Evidence.....	62
Internal Evidence.....	67
Conclusion.....	68
Six: Conclusion	70
List of References.....	77

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Gospels According to Saint Matthew, Saint Mark, and Saint Luke are the first three books found in the New Testament. These three Gospels are called *synoptic gospels*. The reason for this is because the information found within the pages of each Gospel is similar to the others. The word *synoptic* actually comes from a word found in the Greek language. This Greek word is *synoptikos*, “which means ‘seeing with’” (Freed, 58). In other words, it can be said that *synoptikos* means “‘seeing the whole together’” (Freed, 58). Therefore, it can be said that the Gospels According to Saint Matthew, Saint Mark, and Saint Luke portray to the reader the story of Jesus’ life, including the type of works He did and the teachings He taught his followers and the people, all in a related or comparable fashion (Freed, 58).

Although the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are all synoptic gospels, it is important to point out that not everything is similar. For example, while these three Synoptic Gospels may be consistent with each other on the central milestones during Jesus’ lifetime and even some key actions, they might not agree on certain details. These differences in detail usually include his teachings and even details about Jesus himself. They also differ on details about important key figures such as John the Baptist (Freed, 59). For example, the three Synoptic Gospels talk about John the Baptist, but they differ in certain areas about him. One finds literature about John the Baptist in Mark 1:1-6, Matthew 3:1-6, and in Luke 3:1-6. All three Synoptic Gospels agree on certain points, such as how John the Baptist’s main theme of preaching is repentance and that he preaches in close proximity to the Jordan River (Freed, 59-60).

But there are also differences such as how each Synoptic Gospel refers or presents John the Baptist. In the Gospel of Mark, the author refers to him as “John the baptizer...” (Mark 1: 4, as quoted in Throckmorton, 8). This is most likely a reference to how John the Baptist is doing the baptizing. Then in the Gospel of Matthew, the author describes him as “...John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea” (Matthew 3:1, as quoted in Throckmorton, 8). The way Matthew writes “the Baptist,” in the sentence is in the form of a “noun in Greek, rather than a participle as in Mark” (Freed, 60). Finally, in the Gospel of Luke, the author states that “...the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness” (Luke 3:2, as quoted in Throckmorton, 8). In this way, John the Baptist is presented in a more “biographical” way by stating that he is “the son of Zechariah” (Freed, 60).

In just this example alone, one can see that there are both similarities and differences found within the pages of the Synoptic Gospels even though they are discussing the same person or event. But even with all of the similarities that they share, there are a few problems that have emerged. One of the most important ones being that if there are so many similarities, then most likely the authors of the Synoptic Gospels had access to each other’s writings. This poses the question of which author copied from the other. This question or problem is known as the *Synoptic Problem*.

THE PRIORITY OF MARK

The *Synoptic Problem* has many theorized solutions to it. The one that is accepted by a large number of scholars is known as “the priority of Mark” (Freed, 61). This theory states that contrary to the order found in the New Testament, which is Matthew, Mark, and Luke, it is presumed by this theory that in reality Mark’s Gospel

should be first. Therefore, according to the *Markan Priority Theory*, if Mark's Gospel was written first, then the Gospels of Matthew and Luke used Mark's Gospel as a "primary source" (Freed, 61).

When taking a closer look at the Synoptic Gospels it seems that the authors of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke used information found in Mark's Gospel. At times the information is copied exactly and at other times the authors take the information and edit it in their own way, such as taking information out or adding information to the original text. Additionally, it is interesting to note that while reading through the Synoptic Gospels one may notice a type of pattern that develops and, for the most part, reappears time and time again. The pattern goes as follows, "Matthew can differ from Mark and Luke, and Luke can differ from Matthew and Mark, but Matthew and Luke together usually do not differ from Mark, at least not on larger points" (Freed, 61).

If one actually sat down and counted, it is estimated that the author of Matthew's Gospel duplicates about ninety percent of the information found in the Gospel of Mark. This is equivalent to approximately 606 verses out of 661. In addition, the author of Matthew's Gospel utilizes many identical phrases and words that are found in Mark's Gospel. When looking at the Gospel of Luke, one finds that the author only duplicates a little over half of the information found in Mark's Gospel. This is approximately equivalent to 350 verses (Freed, 61).

The arguments discussed above lead scholars to believe that the Gospel of Mark came first and the Gospels of Matthew and Luke used Mark's Gospel when writing down their own. It is also interesting to point out that the authors of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke usually stick to the sequence of events in the way the author of the Gospel of

Mark has it written down in his Gospel. Also, the authors of Matthew's and Luke's Gospels have a tendency to duplicate the same words or phrases found in Mark's Gospel. Sometimes both Matthew's and Luke's Gospels duplicate the same word or phrases, and sometimes one duplicates a certain area, while the other duplicates a different one. Sometimes one Gospel might stray from Saint Mark's Gospel's order, while the other one keeps to it and vice versa. Therefore, these pieces of evidence support the theory that the Gospel of Mark was written first and the author of the Gospel of Matthew and the author of the Gospel of Luke used Mark's Gospel as a primary source when writing down their own Gospel (Freed, 61).

COMPOSITION TIMELINE

In order to determine the dates of the Synoptic Gospels it is necessary to find some fixed point from which to begin. In most studies, that fixed point has been the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE. The usual thinking has been that since the Jesus of the Gospels predicts the destruction of the city and temple, the earliest Gospel must have been composed some time near (i.e., when the destruction was imminent) or very shortly after that time. Usually the date selected is 68 CE when the Romans laid siege to Jerusalem and its end could be foreseen. Then one's solution to the Synoptic problem is used to determine dates for the other texts. Contrary to this, I propose that the best starting point is the date of the Book of Acts of the Apostles, which can be placed at 62 CE. Luke's Gospel is earlier and Mark's Gospel earlier still.

CHAPTER TWO: THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

INTRODUCTION

Directly connected in determining the composition dates of the Synoptic Gospels, is the dating of the Book of Acts of the Apostles, because of its relation with Luke. While most scholars agree that the Book of the Acts of the Apostles is the sequel or part two of Luke, there are some scholars who argue that the Book of the Acts of the Apostles was written before the Gospel According to Luke (Witherington III, 60). One such scholar is C.S.C. Williams, who argues in his book, "The Date of Luke-Acts," that the Book of the Acts of the Apostles was written at an earlier date and Luke was written at a later date. The majority of the reasons and debates argued by those scholars who share Williams' point of view have been considered to be hypothetical, theoretical, and in general not compelling enough (Robinson, 92).

As a result, the most common view is that Luke was written first and the Book of the Acts of the Apostles was written afterwards. The best piece of evidence supporting this is the text itself. In Acts 1:1 the text states, "In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles, whom he had chosen" (Acts of the Apostles 1:1).

The debate concerning the date of composition of Acts is divided into categories of late, intermediate, and earlier dating. Scholars supporting the later dating usually place the date of Acts in the second century CE, most often between 100 to 130 CE. Those supporting the intermediate dating often place the date of Acts around the 80's. Finally,

scholars supporting the earlier dating usually place the date of composition of Acts around the late 50's to early 60's (Fitzmyer, 51-54).

It is important to point out that regardless of how scholars place the dating, whether it is late, intermediate, or early, it is essential to remember that most scholars believe that Acts is the sequel to Luke. Therefore, the date of composition of Acts and the date of composition of Luke affect each other because Luke is considered part one of two and Acts is considered part two of two (Elwell and Yarbrough, 210-211).

LATER DATING

The later dating of Acts falls in the second century, more specifically around 100 to 130 CE (Fitzmyer, 53). Many times, supporters of a late dating place Luke as being written around 90 CE, with Acts a few years after that, about 90 or 100 CE (Schnelle, 260). Scholars who support the later dating use a variety of reasons to support their claim, such as “the alleged dependence of Luke on Josephus, or a relationship of Acts to the writings of Marcion or of Justin Martyr” (Fitzmyer, 53).

Problems with the Later Dating

First let us start out by examining the possible relationship of Acts to Josephus. Josephus was born in 37/38 CE and lived to a little after 100 CE. He composed his first work, *Jewish War*, between the years 75 CE and 79 CE. Josephus also published his comprehensive *Antiquities of the Jews*, in the year 93/94 CE. Furthermore, Josephus was able to publish one last document before he died around the year 100 CE. These dates are important because they make it extremely unlikely that the author of Acts, who wrote before the year 70 CE, would have read Josephus' works, even more unlikely that the

author would even have used some of Josephus' texts as references during the writing of Acts (Fitzmyer, 53).

While some scholars, such as Krenkel and Wendt, have tried to show evidence for the opposite, their arguments have not been extremely convincing. For example, Wendt states that there is "only one incident [that is] at all certain" that points to Acts being dependent on Josephus, which is Acts 5:36 (Harnack, 115). Since this is the only instance, scholars such as Schurer and Plummer argue that the author of Acts did not read Josephus' works or that at the time of composition, the author of Acts did not remember the information he had learned from Josephus (Harnack 114-115).

As far as Justin Martyr is concerned, J.C. O'Neill is a big supporter of Acts using the works of Justin Martyr. Consequently, in O'Neill's *The Theology of Acts in its Historical Setting*, he dates the composition date of Acts to be between 115 CE to 130 CE, in order to reflect the connection between Justin Martyr and Acts. There have been scholars who have done extensive reviews and assessments on such a connection. Two such scholars are H.D.F. Sparks and G. Schneider. Both Sparks and Schneider have evaluated and analyzed O'Neill's work and they both strongly disagree with such a connection. For starters, Justin Martyr was alive between the years of 100 CE to 165 CE. This means he was born after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 CE. Just as it is unlikely for the author of Acts to have used Josephus' works due to the time period when Josephus was alive and writing his texts, it is unlikely for the author of Acts to have used the writings of Justin Martyr, mainly because, as we have discussed previously, Acts was written before 70 CE and Justin Martyr is writing well after that year (Fitzmyer, 53-54 and Robinson, 87-89).

Another argument against a connection between Acts and Justin Martyr is the differences in their types of Christology. For example, Harnack argues that the Christology found in Acts is more primitive than the one found in Justin Martyr. As such, this places Acts before the works of Justin Martyr. Furthermore, scholars who argue against an Acts and Justin Martyr connection point out that the comprehension of Jesus' death is also primitive (Fitzmyer, 53-54 and Harnack, 109). Even though "Luke connected this death with the forgiveness of sins, he had in no sense attained to the heights of Pauline doctrine" (Harnack, 109). As a result, the author of Acts could not have read nor used his works if Acts was composed before Justin Martyr.

As far as a connection between Acts and Marcion is concerned, the main supporter in that area is John Knox. In his work *Marcion and the New Testament: An Essay in the Early History of the Canon*, Knox states that Acts was written around 140 CE, which is a date that would reflect Acts using Marcion's works. Scholars who disagree with a Marcion and Acts connection, argue that the author of Acts could not have used Marcion's works as a source because he was a theologian from the second century, more specifically from 110 – 160. As such, his works are dated to have been written more than 40 years after the destruction of the Jerusalem. Therefore, the author of Acts did not use Marcion as a source when writing down the text. This disproves any connection between Marcion and Acts (Fitzmyer, 53-54 and Robinson 87-89).

INTERMEDIATE DATING

The most common intermediate date for Acts is in the 80's. The focus of this argument is to have a date after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. In other words, unlike the earlier dating group, which looked for a date before 70 CE, the intermediate

group looks for a date after 70 CE, but not too distant like the later dating group who argue for a second century date (Fitzmyer, 54).

The Gospel According to Saint Luke

In general, those who support the intermediate dating get their evidence not from Acts, but from Luke and from Mark. The fact that the supporters of the intermediate dating get their supportive evidence from external sources, rather than internally from Acts, can be seen as a negative aspect. But it can also be argued that Luke is not as external as one might think, because it is written by the same author and it is meant to be part one of a two part collection.

Supporters of the intermediate dating point out that in Luke 1:1, Luke states that he acknowledges the fact that there have been several others before him who have made the effort to retell and narrate Jesus' story. Presuming that Luke is telling the truth in this statement, supporters of the intermediate dating of Acts use this evidence to support a post 70 CE dating. These scholars argue that "there is simply no evidence that already in the 50s or early 60s there had been many attempts to compose a Gospel" (Witherington III, 60). As a result, this indicates to a date later than the early 60's, which supports their argument for a date after 70 CE closer to 80 CE.

Supporters of the intermediate dating of Acts also highlight Luke 13:35, which states "'your house is abandoned,' addressed to Jerusalem" (Fitzmyer, 54). This statement is logical if the destruction of Jerusalem has already occurred. Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 CE by the Romans, therefore Acts had to have been written in a time after 70 CE, since that is when Jerusalem was destroyed and logic implies that it has already happened. Another important verse is found in Luke 19:43-44, where the author

“alludes to Roman earthworks of the sort described by Josephus” (Fitzmyer, 54). The significance behind the Roman earthworks is to provide proof that the Romans have already invaded and most likely occupied and settled in Jerusalem. Supporters of the intermediate dating argue that this implies that Luke was written after the year 70 CE, which logically means that Acts was written after 70 CE as well, since it was written after Luke.

The Gospel According to Saint Mark

Another key factor in determining the date for Acts is taking a look at the dating of Mark. Most scholars agree that Mark was written first and the author of Luke and the author of Matthew had access to Mark and they both used it when writing their own gospels. If this is true, then that means that Luke had to have been written after Mark (Witherington III, 60).

Supporters of the intermediate dating point to Mark 13 for supportive evidence to their argument. Mark 13 implies that Mark “was written no earlier than the late 60s when Christians in Rome were under persecution and were concerned about the contemporary events then happening in Jerusalem” (Witherington III, 60-61). Since it is believed that Mark was written no earlier than the late 60s and most probably around 70 CE, this places Luke a little later than that, possibly the early to mid 70s. As a result, Acts is believed to have been written in the late 70s or early 80s as the more probable date (Witherington III, 62).

Problems with the Intermediate Dating

The problem with the intermediate dating is that it relies on external evidence to prove the proposed date, which is that Acts was written in the 80's. The supporters of the

intermediate date range place it around this time because they strongly believe that the text was written after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. As a result, this group of scholars analyzes verses in Luke, such as Luke 13:35, which can be interpreted as giving reference to this event having already occurred. Supporters of a date before 70 CE would argue that the scholars who support the intermediate date range do not believe in predictive prophecies.

Scholars who support a date after 70 CE also look at Luke 19:43-44, in which Luke states that "...your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you, and hem you in on every side..." (Luke 19:43). This is seen by the supporters of the intermediate dating to be allusions "to Roman earthworks of the sort described by Josephus" (Fitzmyer, 54). Supporters of an earlier date contest this belief by again claiming that those who support the intermediate date range do not believe in predictive prophecies. Also, they say that the use of ramparts is not exclusive to Romans, but that the Egyptians used them as well. Furthermore, the usage of ramparts was a well-known Roman war tactic and not exclusive to Jerusalem in 70 CE. Therefore, the author of Acts had previous knowledge of the way the Romans attacked.

Supporters of an intermediate date also look at the date of Mark as proof that Acts was written at a later date. The reasoning behind this is that Acts was written after Mark. The problem with this is that there are various scholars who argue late, intermediate, and early dates for the composition of Mark. Supporters of an intermediate date for Acts are indirectly or directly supporting a later date for Mark that would reflect their argued date for Acts. As the paper progresses one will see that the intermediate date is the most probable one for Mark.

EARLIER DATING

The last group of scholars argues for an early dating of the text. In general, this earlier date is in the late 50's to early 60's, more specifically 58 to 64 CE, before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE (Barrett, xxv). Whether Acts was written before Saint Paul's house arrest by Roman authorities was terminated, or a year or so after he was released, varies from scholar to scholar. But in general, those supporting the earlier dating stress that the date must be before the date 70 CE and before the death of Saint James and Saint Paul (Fitzmyer, 51).

Omissions as Supportive Evidence

In general, scholars who support the earlier dating look at two main categories in order to support their argument. These two categories are what is included in the text and what has not been included. Both categories are equally important because they give clues on an estimated date in which Acts was written. Important omissions include: Paul's trial before Caesar, Paul's martyrdom, Paul's letters, the Jewish Rebellion, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, Nero's persecution, and the death of James (Fitzmyer, 51-52 and Robinson 89).

Saint Paul's Trial and Martyrdom

One of the most important omissions is the fact that Acts does not mention Paul's trial before Caesar and his death. Scholars who support the earlier dating argue that it does not make sense for the author not to mention these events after he has dedicated the second half of Acts to Paul. It seems odd and out of place to not mention the trial before Caesar and the martyrdom of Paul after all that has been mentioned about his activities, journeys, and hardships. Therefore, the supporters of the earlier dating of Acts believe

that since there is no mention about Paul's trial and death, the text must have been written before these events had taken place (Harnack, 97-98).

One of the characteristics of the writings of the author of Luke and Acts's writings is his love of prophecies. If Paul's trial and death really had happened before he was able to compose Acts, then why is there no allusion to those events in the text? It would be more logical for the author to include them in Acts if those events had already happened than to not include them or not even hint at them even happening or possibly happening. Acts mentions other events in a prophetic manner, such events as the famine, the sea voyage, and Paul's imprisonment in Jerusalem. Then why would the author of Acts of the Apostles not make a prophetic hint about a major event such as the trial before Caesar and the death of Saint Paul? The logical answer, which supporters of the earlier dating agree on, is because the author does not know of such events. The reason the author does not know about these events is because they have not yet occurred. And since they have not yet happened, this gives further proof that Acts was written at an earlier date (Harnack, 97-98).

Saint Paul's Letters

Another interesting omission, which supporters of the earlier dating of Acts of the Apostles point out, is how the author of the text does not make any reference to any of Saint Paul's letters. This fact implies that maybe the author of Acts wrote the text before the Pauline letters were in extensive transmission. In fact, it is almost as if the author was not aware of their existence at all. This allows a reasonable explanation as to why Acts of the Apostles fails to agree in certain parts with Galatians and 2 Corinthians (Fitzmyer, 52).

Kummel insists that the omission of any allusion to the Pauline letters cannot and should not be seen as a conscious decision by the author of Acts. Robinson insists that the fact that there is no reference to the Pauline letters is proof that the date of Acts cannot be as late as the second century, because if it was indeed written during that time period then the author of Acts must have included allusions to the Pauline letters because by that time, they were widely and heavily circulated among the people (Robinson, 87-88).

Saint James' Death

The fact that Acts makes no mention of the death of Saint James in 62 CE is considered an important omission. One of the reasons it is so important is because it is a dated event. "The death of James the Lord's brother in 62, which took place at the hands of the Sanhedrin *against* the authority of Rome" is not mentioned in Acts (Robinson, 89). This is considered to be a very illogical omission. Why would such an important event be omitted from the text? Supporters of the earlier dating of Acts suggest that the reason it is omitted is the same reason Saint Paul's trial and death were omitted as well. Because they simply have not yet happened at the time the author of Acts of the Apostles was composing the text.

Primitive Christology

The Christology found in Acts is considered primitive Christology when compared to those found in the later years of the Church and even to the Christology found in the Pauline epistles. What we find in Acts concerning Christology is that there is a strong belief that the full prophecy concerning Jesus has not yet been fulfilled. In other words, Jesus' life on Earth did not fulfill the prophecy. While the Resurrection

acknowledged Jesus a messiah, it does not make him the actual Messiah the Earth has been waiting for (Harnack, 107-108).

The only way that Jesus can become the actual Messiah is by coming again. Because of the resurrection, Jesus was able to attain the throne of the Universe, but He has yet to attain the throne of David. The only way this can be realized is when Jesus comes again. Until his second advent is realized, Jesus will only have the throne of the Universe. This trail of thought is considered to be primitive Christology and not at all comparable to the heights of Pauline doctrine. Therefore this implies that the author of Acts must have been writing at an earlier date since his Christology is a primitive one (Harnack, 109-110).

Primitive Terminology

Not only was the author's Christology primitive, therefore providing evidence that Acts was written at an early date, but the terminology of Acts is also primitive in relation to what is used later on, supporting a belief that Acts was written at an earlier date. For example the words "Jesus," (Ἰησοῦς) "Lord," (Κύριος) and "Christ" (Χριστός) are all terms which later Christians will use interchangeably. When the author is writing Acts, we see that he does not do this. To him only "Jesus" and "The Lord" are proper names, while "Christ" is not a proper name. Harnack states that "to St. Luke 'Christ' is not a proper name like 'Jesus'; he still feels to the full that it means 'the Messiah,'" (Harnack, 104). The word "Christ" rarely occurs in Acts. In fact, it is used a total of twenty-five times, while Jesus is used three times as often.

Something interesting to point out is that out of those twenty-five times that Christ is used, it appears in the phrase "Jesus Christ" (Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) eleven times

throughout the entire book and only fourteen times by itself. Of those eleven times, it occurs seven times in the phrase “The name of Jesus Christ” (το ὄνομα Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). What this means is that the phrase “Jesus Christ” was only known to the author of Acts in a formal setting or combination and not in an everyday way of speaking (Harnack, 104-106).

We have discussed seven out of the eleven times that the phrase “Jesus Christ” appears in Acts; the remaining four times are separated into two groups. The first group has the phrase “Jesus Christ” combined with the word “the Lord” (ὁ Κύριος). Just like the phrase “Jesus Christ” and the phrase “The name of Jesus Christ” was formal in nature, so is “Jesus Christ the Lord” formal in nature. The phrase, “Jesus Christ the Lord” can be found in Acts 11:17 and in Acts 28:31 (Harnack, 104-106).

The last group contains the remaining two times out of the eleven, in which the phrase “Jesus Christ” occurs without the word “the name” (το ὄνομα) and without the word “the Lord” (ὁ Κύριος). These two occurrences are found in Acts 9:34 and in Acts 10:36 (Harnack, 104-106). What I think Harnack is trying to point out is that the terminology indicates that the phrase “Jesus Christ” was a phrase used in a formal combination many times accompanied by words such as the “name” and “the Lord.” One rarely found “Christ” by itself because it was not a word that was part of the everyday tongue yet. This means that the author of Acts must have been writing the text at an earlier date when words such as “Christ” had not yet entered the main streamline of language as an alternate name for Jesus rather than a title.

Conclusion of the Acts of the Apostles

Supporters of the earlier dating of Acts like to start with the end of the text as the reference point for the date of book. In other words, by looking at the concluding lines of Acts, Acts 28:30-31, they say one can achieve a good first step at coming up with a logical date for Acts. Acts 28:30-31 states that “He [Saint Paul] lived there two whole years at his own expense and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance” (Acts of the Apostles 28:30-31). “If the author [of the Book of Acts] stops at [Acts]28:31 because he has now brought the story up to date the book will have been completed in about” 58 CE and quite possibly a few years after that date, such as sometime during the early 60’s (Barrett, xxv).

Objections

Those who oppose the earlier dating of Acts have come up with a series of theories both on why the text ends so abruptly and why it does not include certain things that would normally have been included, such as Paul’s trial and death and the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. The first of these theories is that Paul’s trial and death was widely known and was common knowledge. There was no reason to spend more time and effort retelling events that people were well aware of. R.P.C. Hanson suggests that since his Roman readers already knew how the story ended, what they wanted to know was how Paul got to where he was (Hanson, 224-230). The second theory is the author of Acts achieved his purpose for writing the text after his main character reached Rome. There was no reason to keep writing if one’s original objective has been achieved. The third reason is that the author of Acts wanted to keep the Roman

government in a tasteful and friendly light in his writings; therefore he refrained from writing about Paul's martyrdom because it made the Romans look bad (Harnack, 96-97).

The fourth reason is that the author of Acts ran out of paper and so where he left off turned out to be the end of the book. The fifth theory is that the author of Acts was rudely or unexpectedly interrupted and was never able to pick up from where he left off for whatever unknown or unexplained reason. The sixth theory is that the author of Acts had planned to write a third book. Instead of it being a two part collection, the author's intentions were to make a trilogy set. But something unknown happened and he never got to write the third installment of his trilogy. The seventh theory is that the author wanted to write the text as though he were an eyewitness to the accounts. As such, he could not write about events he knew were going to happen, because he is pretending to write during an earlier period than what he really is living in. In order to keep the effect alive, the author would have to omit a few things from the text (Harnack 96-97, 99).

If in the event I stopped believing that Acts was written earlier, the more logical or most probable theory for why it was written later would be theory number six, that the author of Acts planned to write a third book that never happened. If this theory were true, I am inclined to agree with Harnack that the author stopped in an awkward place. If the author of Acts really did intend to write a third book, why would he choose to stop writing in such a spot? Harnack states that "the place where the narrative now breaks off is as unsuitable as it possibly can be. The readers are kept upon the rack" (Harnack, 97). Therefore, even though theory number six is the most likely proposed explanation by supporters of a later date for the stated omissions, it is still unlikely to be true because

Acts was most likely written before the death of Saint Paul and Saint James, which better explains the omissions, resulting in an earlier date for Acts.

Supporters of a later date argue that this suspense is intended in order to draw readers back to the coming third volume, which some people today assume to be true. The third volume would most likely continue from where the second volume left off; the trial before Caesar has not happened, but Paul has just been released from house arrest. The author of Acts might want to start the last book with the trial before Caesar, followed by Paul's martyrdom. The author would most likely draw out the whole process as he does Paul's journeys in Acts.

CONCLUSION

There are three main categories surrounding the possible dates of composition for Acts, a later dating, an intermediate dating, and an earlier dating. Each of these categories is supported by a variety of scholars who look at a range of material in order to support their claim and prove their argument.

The first category consists of scholars who argue for a later date range for Acts. This group of scholars usually places the date of composition of Acts to be in the second century, more specifically around 100 CE to 130 CE. The main line of defense for those who support a later dating of Acts argues that the author of Acts used the works of Josephus, Justin Martyr, and Marcion when writing the Gospel. Since these scholars are all from the second century, then consequently, Acts had to have been written in the second century as well.

The second category is composed of the scholars who support the intermediate date range for Acts. This group proposes that Acts was written in the 80's. The main

topic of focus for the supporters of the intermediate dating is that Acts was written down after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. As a result, it was also written after the deaths of Saint Paul, Saint Peter and Saint James, since they died before the Temple's destruction by the Romans in the year 70 CE. These scholars defend their position by pointing out verses in the other Gospels that make reference to the destruction of Jerusalem and claiming those events to be false prophecies, because the author of Acts knew of these events and was writing in a reflective tone.

The third and final category consists of scholars who argue for an earlier date range for Acts. Scholars who support the earlier range dates Acts between the late 50's to the early 60's, many times the date 62 CE is proposed. This is because supporters who belong to this group argue that Acts was written before the death of Saint Paul (67 CE), Saint Peter (~64 CE), and Saint James (62 CE) and also before the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE.

After reviewing all three date ranges (late, intermediate, and early), I believe that Acts was most likely written in the year 62 CE, which is the date range that the supporters of the early category support. This is because after evaluating the other proposed dates, this date has the most convincing internal and external evidence, and has the least amount of problems attached to it.

CHAPTER THREE: THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT LUKE

INTRODUCTION

In general, the debate concerning the date of Luke is divided into three main categories, which are later dating, intermediate dating, and earlier dating. Scholars who support the later dating usually place the date of Luke in the second century CE; this is because they believe Luke is dependant on Josephus' *Antiquities*, which was written in 93 CE (Anchor Bible Dictionary, 404).

Scholars who support the intermediate dating, usually place the date of Luke after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE and after the death of Saint Paul in 64 CE or 67 CE. Supporters of the intermediate date range propose a range from 70 CE to 85 CE. There are also a few scholars who place the date as late as 90 CE (Anchor Bible Dictionary, 404).

Scholars who support the earlier dating usually place the date of Luke before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE and before the death of Saint Paul in 64 CE or 67 CE. In general supporters of the earlier date propose that Luke was written in the late 50's to early 60's (Childers, 420-421 and Morris, 10, 24-25).

LATER DATING: (SECOND CENTURY)

Scholars who support the later dating of Luke usually place the Gospel's composition date during the second century. More specifically, the years 105 CE through 130 CE have been preferred (Coffman, 7). The main line of reasoning comes from Josephus' *Antiquities*, which was written in 93 CE. These scholars claim that certain areas from Acts were taken from Josephus' *Antiquities*. Since these scholars believe this

to be true, they use the fact that Josephus' *Antiquities* was written in 93 CE to support their claim that Luke had to have been written sometime during the second century (Morris, 28).

One of the sections that scholars use as evidence to support their claim, is the part in which Josephus talks about how "Theudas rebelled during the governorship of Fadus, 44-46. He was overthrown and the next governor, Alexander (46-48), executed some of the sons of Judas the Galilean (Morris, 28)." One finds that when the author of Luke recounts this event, he talks about how Gamaliel is talking about Theudas and then of Judas, but not of Judas' sons. Furthermore, Gamaliel is talking about twelve years before the rebellion by Theudas. This leads scholars who support the later dating to believe that while the author of Luke used Josephus' *Antiquities*, he made a few mistakes when writing about it in the Gospel (Morris, 28).

The second section, which scholars who support the later dating of the Gospel of Luke use as evidence, is the part in which Josephus talks about a man named Lysanias. In *Antiquities*, Josephus talks about how this man was "tetrarch of Abilene, [...] [and how] he was executed by Mark Antony in 36 (or 34) BC (Morris, 28)." The problem with this is that when one reads Luke 3:1, where the author talks about Lysanias, it seems that the author of the Gospel of Luke has once again misrepresented Josephus' statements from *Antiquities*. This leads scholars who support the later dating to believe that the author of the Gospel of Luke was using Josephus' *Antiquities*, as can be seen through those two passages discussed above, but the author of Luke misquoted Josephus along the way.

Problems with the Later Dating

Critics of the later dating point out that the author of Luke most likely did not use Josephus' *Antiquities*, as it is not very probable that the author of Luke would misquote Josephus, especially since when tested for the accuracy regarding people and places mentioned in this text the Gospel of Luke is, for the most part, accurate. The most reasonable argument is that the author was talking about different people who had the same names. For example, there is verification that there was another man by the name of Lysanias from Abilene, which is most likely, the one that the author of Luke was talking about (Morris, 28).

INTERMEDIATE DATING: (70 CE – 85 CE)

Introduction

As mentioned earlier, scholars tend to be divided into three main categories on the dating of Luke. The second of these three main dating categories are scholars who argue for an intermediate dating of 75 CE – 85 CE. In general, this intermediate date reflects the belief that Luke was written after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE by the Romans. There are a group of scholars who support an intermediate date for the composition of Luke, who defend the date range of 75 CE to 85 CE (Morris, 25). While there are other scholars who agree on an intermediate date, the range differs a little bit. For example, there are some who prefer the range from 70 CE to 80 CE and others from 80 CE to 90 CE (Coffman, 7 and Duling and Perrin, 369). What is important to understand is that the intermediate dating group focuses on the fact that the Gospel was written after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 CE.

The Death of Saint Paul

An important event, which scholars who are supportive of an intermediate date use as the base line for their argument, is the death of Saint Paul. There are three main passages found in the Book of Acts that are looked at to support the belief that Saint Paul has already died. These passages are Acts of the Apostles 20:25, Acts 20:38, and Acts 21:13 (Schnelle, 243).

The first passage states that “And now I know that none of you, among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom, will ever see my face again” (Acts of the Apostles 20:25). Here we find Saint Paul telling the Ephesians during his visit to Ephesus that they will never see each other again, because he knows he is going to die. The next reads “Grieving especially because of what he had said, that they would not see him again. Then they brought him to the ship” also deals with Saint Paul and the Ephesians (Acts of the Apostles 20:38). This passage records the Ephesians’ reaction to the fact that Saint Paul has told them that they will never see each other again on account that his death is around the corner (Morris, 24-25 and Schnelle, 243).

The third and final passage concerning Saint Paul’s death states, “Then Paul answered, ‘What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus’” (Acts of the Apostles 21:13). This passage is different from the other two in the way it addresses a different audience. In Acts of the Apostles 20:25, and Acts 20:38, Saint Paul is talking to the Ephesians. In Acts of the Apostles 21:13, he is talking to a group of believers including Philip the Evangelist, who are fearful and saddened by Saint Paul’s decision to

go to Jerusalem. He responds by saying that he is not fearful of dying and he is well aware of the fact that it will most likely happen (Schnelle, 243).

The reason that these three passages (Acts of the Apostles 20:25, 38 and Acts 21:13) are important is because scholars who support the intermediate dating suggest that Luke was written both after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE and after the death of Saint Paul in the year 64 CE or 67 CE. As a result, the earliest that Luke could have been written is 70 CE on account of the destruction of Jerusalem. Furthermore, information found in Acts about Saint Paul's death affects the dating of Luke because Luke is written before Acts and if Acts has internal evidence proving that Saint Paul is already dead, then that influences the dating of Luke.

Fake Prophecy

One of the most interesting arguments raised by these groups of scholars is that the author of Luke was writing after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. What makes this belief interesting is that these scholars propose that the author knew about the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE, but decided to write the text in a reflective manner (Morris, 26). In other words, while the author knew about the destruction that occurred in 70 CE, he decided to write about the destruction in a prophetic tone, as an event to come rather than an event that has already happened. This belief reflects the issue concerning "predictive prophecy" (Coffman, 7). The scholars who defend an intermediate dating do not believe that "predictive prophecy" exists (Coffman, 7). Since Jesus could not have spoken of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple after 70 CE, many scholars claim that what some interpret as Jesus' predictions are actually reflections of the author's knowledge of the events that have already

happened. Therefore, Luke must have been written after it had been destroyed by the Romans. On a side note, this type of rationale has a negative implication for Jesus' authority on all of His prophetic speeches. This is due to the fact that by claiming predictive prophecy does not exist, these scholars take away the authority of Jesus' prophetic discourses. In other words, by saying that predictive prophecy does not exist, because the author is writing in a prophetic tone knowledge that the author knows already has happened, puts all of the other prophecies predicted by Jesus in jeopardy of not being authoritative.

Luke 21:20, Luke 21:24, and Luke 19: 43-44

As mentioned earlier, scholars who support an intermediate dating, use the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE as their main line of defense. These scholars look at certain passages within Luke to support their claim. One of these passages is Luke 21:20. In this passage, the author talks about "the encircling 'armies' that would destroy Jerusalem" (Coffman, 7). Keeping in mind that these scholars do not believe in "predictive prophecy;" they tend to argue that the author of the Gospel of Luke used his knowledge of the event and made it seem as if Jesus was foretelling the future (Coffman, 7). The problem with this, which critics of the intermediate dating point out, is that the descriptions stated above were in fact typical of Roman warfare, therefore, the author was not necessarily a witness to the destruction of Jerusalem, but was instead aware of typical Roman tactics.

Another important passage looked at by scholars who support an intermediate date for the composition of Luke is Luke 21:24, which states "They will fall by the edge of the sword and be taken away as captives among all nations; and Jerusalem will be

trampled on by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Luke 21:24). This passage is used to further point out the knowledge of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE. As a result, this passage further supports their claim that the author of Luke knew about the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. Therefore, the date of composition of the Gospel has to be after 70 CE, and not before that date. They stress that one must look beyond the reflective tone of the narrative to seek the truth (Schnelle, 243).

Aside from the two verses discussed above, there is a third verse that is also looked at when arguing for a date that reflects the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. This third verse is Luke 19:43-44, which states

Indeed, the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you, and hem you in on every side. They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave within you one stone upon another; because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God (Luke 19:43-44).

These two verses are believed to be evidence for a later dating by scholars who support a date after the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem in 70 CE. These scholars argue that the author of Luke knew about the destruction of the Temple and that is how they were able to include this “prophecy” in the text (Duling and Perrin, 368-369).

Luke 1:1-4

Scholars who support the intermediate date for Luke use Luke 1:1-4 as evidence supporting their claim. Luke 1:1-4 states:

Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, I too decided, after

investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed (Luke 1:1-4).

Basically in this verse the reader finds the author of the Gospel saying that other texts have been written on the topic before his. Scholars who belong to this group argue that if what the author says is true then the date has to allow enough time for other authors to write down the events and also allow enough time for their texts to circulate (Morris, 26).

The Gentile Overtone

An interesting argument used by scholars who support an intermediate date for the composition of Luke, is the fact that the text has a Gentile overtone. This claim was especially made popular by Ray Summers. He argues that Luke had to have been written after 70 CE because of the “Gentile emphasis” found throughout the text (Coffman, 9). Ray Summers proposes that one of the reasons that the Gospel of Luke has such a deep Gentile overtone is because the majority of the people in the Church after 70 CE were Gentiles. Therefore, it would make sense for the author of Luke to include “more events and discourses from the life of Jesus that were favorable to Gentiles” (Coffman, 9).

The Gospel According to Saint Mark

Another argument placed by scholars who support a date range from 75 CE to 85 CE has to do with dating the Gospel of Mark. These scholars argue that Mark was written no earlier than 68 CE. The reason that this is so important is because these scholars also believe that the author of Luke used the Gospel of Mark as a source (Morris, 26). Therefore, since the author of Luke is using information he finds from Mark, then that text had to have been written first. This is why the date of composition of

Mark is so important. Now since these scholars place the dating no earlier than 68 CE, then the Gospel of Luke had to have been written several years later after that date.

Problems with the Intermediate Dating

There are a few problems with this claim; the most obvious one is that there are a few scholars that do not believe that the author of Luke used information from Mark (Morris, 26-27). Another problem is that these scholars are dating Mark too late, both in my opinion and in that of other scholars, such as Harnack, who places the composition of Mark in the year 60 CE (Harnack, 90).

One of the weaker arguments comes from using the Gentile overtone in the Gospel to date the composition. Scholars, such as Ray Summers, argue that since the Church was mainly made up of Gentiles after the year 70 CE, then it must mean that the author of Luke was writing towards that audience. The problem with this is that the Church already included many Gentiles long before the year 70 CE. The book of Romans demonstrates this fact to be true (Coffman, 9).

The most important reason that this argument holds no water is that the majority of scholars argue that the author of Luke was a Gentile, who “spent years in the companionship of the apostle [Paul] whose preaching was directed to the Gentiles” (Coffman, 9). Taking these facts into consideration, it is pretty much safe to presume that the Gospel would have a Gentile overtone no matter when it was written. Therefore, using the “Gentile emphasis” of the text is not a very reliable way to calculate the composition of Luke (Coffman, 9).

Proponents of intermediate dating for Luke also look at Luke 1:1 as internal evidence to support their claim. The problem with this is not really the Bible verse, but

the way that these scholars interpret the verse. They are saying that the earliest works were written around 70 CE, because that is when Jerusalem was destroyed. This group of scholars is assuming that it took nearly forty years for people to start writing about the events in the life of Jesus. Besides the fact that this seems unreasonable, they are ignoring the works of Paul, whose writings are thought to have been written as early as the late 40's CE to the early 50's CE (Morris, 27). Even though Paul is most likely writing for other reasons besides preserving the memory of Jesus, such as solving problems, the important part is not why he was writing, but the fact that there are works written before 70 CE.

A principal argument comes from Saint Paul's death. In order to prove that Saint Paul has already died, intermediate dating scholars look at three passages found in Acts of the Apostles. These passages are: Acts of the Apostles 20:25, Acts of the Apostles 20:38, and Acts of the Apostles 21:13). The major problem comes from Acts of the Apostles 20:25, 38. In these two passages we see Saint Paul in Ephesus telling the Ephesians that they will never see him again, implying that he will be killed soon. The passage also includes the Ephesians' sorrowful reaction to never seeing Saint Paul again. It ends with Saint Paul getting on the ship (Morris, 24-25).

The main problem with this is that in the Pastoral Letters there is evidence that Saint Paul does indeed see the Ephesians again. This evidence is found in 1 Timothy 1:3, which states, "I urge you, as I [Saint Paul] did when I was on my way to Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach any different doctrine..." (1 Timothy: 3). Therefore it is logical to deduce that if in fact the author of Luke was writing after the death of Saint Paul, he would include a comment or two about

the prophecy that stated he would not see them again. But there is no mention of such a notion. Therefore, critics of the intermediate dating claim that Luke must have been written before the death of Saint Paul, because if it was written after there would be some kind of comment about the prophecy (Morris 24-25). Scholars who support an intermediate date range for Luke defend their position by not accepting the Pastoral Letters as truly Pauline or historically accurate.

But their main argument is based on the supposed prophecies. In other words, the author knew of the destruction of the Jerusalem in 70 CE, mainly because it has already happened, but has decided to write the text in a reflective tone for dramatic effect. The main problem with this is the question why the author would be so vague about the event and not include more details, if it has already happened (Morris, 26)? As a result, scholars who do not support this dating range use this obvious question as a way to disprove their claim.

In addition to the generalization issue, there is also a problem when taking a look at Luke 21:20. These groups of scholars use this verse to support their claim that “predictive prophecy” does not exist. Instead, the author of Luke is giving the text a more prophetic and reflective overtone (Coffman, 7-8). The problem with this passage, which reads “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near” is that it is similar to the passage found in both Mark and Matthew (Luke 21:20). In Mark 13:14, the passage reads, “But when you see the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be (let the reader understand), then those in Judea must flee to the mountains” (Mark 13:14). While Matthew 22:7 reads, “The

king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city” (Matthew 22:7).

What is important to point out here is that all three of the passages are similar in their description. They basically say the same thing, which is that the city of Jerusalem will be surrounded by armies and destroyed. If there is no argument that proposes to place the date of the composition of Mark and Matthew after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, then why would one argue for the placement of Luke after 70 CE, since it contains just as much information about the prophesized event as the other two Synoptic Gospels (Coffman, 8)?

EARLIER DATING

Acts of the Apostles 1:1

Certain scholars who favor an early date for Luke believe they can confidently assign its composition to 58 CE – 60 CE. The reason it does not extend past 60 CE is because these scholars are looking at the composition date of Acts. This group of scholars places Acts’ composition date during Saint Paul’s first incarceration by the Romans, which happened in 61 CE – 63 CE. This is important because this means that the absolute latest dates that for the composition of Luke is no earlier than 61 CE – 63 CE, which is why the range ends at 60 CE (Morris, 10). The reason that it is so important to place the Gospel before Acts is because of Acts 1:1, which states that “In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning...” (Acts of the Apostles 1:1). In other words, Luke was written before Acts, which is believed to have been written in 62 CE (Robinson, 92).

In regards to the dating of Acts, these scholars believe it was written during the last two years of Saint Paul's incarceration by the Romans. The reason for this belief is because Acts ends with Saint Paul still imprisoned, waiting to have his case heard by Caesar. In other words, Acts was written while Saint Paul was still alive, which means that Luke was also written while Saint Paul was still alive. If Saint Paul was already martyred, then logic would demand that the author of Acts would have recorded such an important moment. Therefore, these scholars claim that the event has yet to unfold at the time of composition of Luke (Morris, 10).

Paul's Imprisonment and the Destruction of Jerusalem

Scholars who argue for an earlier dating usually argue for a date around 58 CE to the early 60's CE, because they believe that Luke was written after the author's stay in Palestine and not before it. These scholars tend to support the belief that Luke was most likely written in Caesarea during Saint Paul's imprisonment. Therefore, the starting date in this range is 58 CE (Childers, 420-421). Besides the imprisonment of Saint Paul, another important event that this group of scholars looks at is the destruction of Jerusalem. Scholars who support the earlier dating of Luke believe that Jesus' prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem have not yet happened (Childers, 421). As a result, this places the composition of Luke before the year 70 CE, which is when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans.

Omissions

The author of Luke and Acts omits certain pieces of information, which some scholars use as evidence to support the earlier dating of the text. One such significant piece of information that was not included in Acts are the letters of Saint Paul. The

author does not include any of Saint Paul's letters. Furthermore, the text does not refer to any of them or even talk about the existence of the letters. It is more probable that Saint Paul's letters were overlooked by the author before they were compiled and canonized than after the fact (Johnson, 2). As a result, scholars who support the earlier dating of Luke use this evidence found in Acts to prove their point, because Luke is part one of two and Acts is part two of two of the author's book.

In Acts 11:28, the author talks about the realization of the prophecy of Agabus. But in Luke 21:20, the author does not mention the realization of Jesus' prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem. It would only make sense that if the author of Luke was writing after the year 70 CE, that he would make some kind of reference to the realization of Jesus' prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem (Morris, 25). Therefore, it is inferred that the author is not writing after 70 CE, but before that date.

Events after 62 CE

Among those who give an earlier date of composition for Luke there exists one group of scholars who narrows the range from the late 50's to the early 60's to a more specific date, which is the year 63 CE. The reason for this date is due to the fact that the author of the text omits three important events that happened after the year 62 CE. These three events are the death of Saint James, the death of Saint Paul, and the destruction of Jerusalem (Morris, 24-25).

Neither the death of Saint James nor Saint Paul were included in the text by the author. Saint James died in 62 CE, but there is no mention of the event anywhere in the text. Also the death of Saint Paul, which is argued to be either in 64 CE or 67 CE, was ignored by the author. These two very important missing pieces of information are used

as evidence by scholars who support the earlier dating of about 63 CE of Luke (Morris, 25). If the author was writing after this year, then it would make logical sense that he would include these two very important events. But since the author fails to include them or at least make the most minimal reference to them, it is presumed that the author must clearly have written Luke before these significant events took place.

As mentioned earlier, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans happened in the year 70 CE. The supporters for the composition of Luke in or around the year 63 CE also make mention of the absence of Jerusalem's fate from the text (Morris, 25). The destruction of Jerusalem is considered to be significant, not just because of its historical value, but because Jesus prophesized the event. Therefore, to omit mention of it altogether in the text would be inexplicable. Given the omission, scholars, who support the year 63 CE as the composition date of Luke, venture to believe that the text had to have been written before the event ever took place.

Earlier Dating Summary: Late 50's – Early 60's

What is important to note of these three theories for an earlier dating is that they all agree that the range has to end before 64 CE. This date is important because it is associated with Nero's persecution, which is not mentioned in Luke. The fact that this is not mentioned leads these scholars to argue a date before 64 CE. Furthermore, the fact that Luke ends with Saint "Paul's first stay in prison, with no date set for his trial and Rome still at peace," places the date in 62 CE or 63 CE at the latest (Elwell and Yarbrough, 99). In addition, most scholars tend to agree that the beginning range of the composition is in the late 50's. While some put the beginning range starting at 58 CE

others place it at 59 CE, the most important thing to point out is that Luke was written no earlier than somewhere in the late 50's and no later than 62 CE.

CONCLUSION

There are three main categories surrounding the possible dates of composition for Luke: a later dating, an intermediate dating, and an earlier dating. Each of these categories is supported by a variety of scholars who look at a range of material in order to support their claim and prove their argument.

The first category is that of the later dating. The groups of scholars that belong to this category usually place the date of the composition of Luke to be in the second century, more specifically around 105 CE to 130 CE. The main line of defense for these groups of scholars is claiming that the author of the Gospel uses Josephus' *Antiquities* as a source to gather information. The reason behind this is because there are a couple of passages that have similarities within the two texts, but, as discussed above, the arguments are very weak. In order to make this theory work, scholars claim that the author of Luke made a few errors when copying from Josephus' *Antiquities*. This does not seem all that possible and for the most part this theory does not hold much water.

The second category is that of the intermediate dating. This category also has a range of dates. These dates are from 75 CE – 85 CE. It is important to mention that there are some scholars, such as Schnelle, who support the year 90 CE. What is important to understand from this group of scholars is that their main topic of focus is that the composition of Luke was written after the death of Saint Paul either in 64 CE or 67 CE and after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE.

The main reason for this is that these scholars do not believe in what James Burton Coffman describes as “predictive prophecy.” This means that they do not believe that what is written to sound like prophecy really is a prediction of the future. The angle that these scholars take is that it is supposed to *sound* like prophecy, but it really is not prophecy. The only reason that it sounds like prophecy is because the author of Luke was writing in the time after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE and after the death of Saint Paul in 64 CE or 67 CE. Therefore, the author knows what is going to happen and makes it sound reflective when he puts writes about it in the Gospel.

The last of these categories are the scholars who argue for an earlier dating of the text (58 CE to early 60’s CE), some of whom support the specific date 63 CE. But what is important to note about the scholars who support the earlier dates of composition of Luke is that the Gospel was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE and before the death of Saint Paul in 64 CE or 67 CE.

After reviewing all three date ranges (late, intermediate, and early), the most likely proposed date is that Luke was written in the late 50’s to early 60’s, which is the date range the supporters of the early category support. This is because after evaluating the other proposed dates, this date seems to be the most probable, with the most amounts of convincing evidence, and with the least amount of problems attached to it. Furthermore, it incorporates what was concluded earlier in the previous chapter, which is that Acts was most likely written in 62 CE. As a result, Luke had to have been written before 62 CE, most likely between 58 CE to the early 60’s CE.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT MATTHEW

INTRODUCTION

In regards to the debate over when the Gospel of Matthew was written, most scholars fall into one of two camps: either after the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem in the year 70 CE or before its devastation. Those that support a date after the destruction, which occurred in the year 70 CE, usually give a range between 80 around 100 CE (Earle, 21 and Harrington, 8). Those scholars who support a date before 70 CE usually propose a range from about 50 CE to 64 CE (Robinson, 104).

AFTER THE TEMPLE'S DESTRUCTION IN 70 CE

External Evidence

According to Markan Priority, Matthew had to have been written after Mark. Since the Gospel of Mark is usually given a date after Nero's persecution in 64 CE by supporters of a later date for Mark, these scholars who support such a piece of evidence for the dating of Mark usually place its composition date from about 60 CE to 75 CE (Argyle, 17 and Harrington, 8). Furthermore, when looking at ancient works, such as the writings of Irenaeus, many of them point out that Mark was written after the deaths of Saint Peter and Saint Paul in Rome. In addition, one must take into account the time needed for Mark to gain recognition, to circulate to places such as Syria and Palestine, and finally to be read and studied by the author of Matthew (Argyle, 17). In other words, Matthew is estimated to have been written a few years after 67 CE, but no later than 100 CE. As a result, scholars who support a dating of Matthew after 70 CE, usually give the

composition date of a range from about 80 CE to about 100 CE (Earle, 21 and Harrington, 8).

The reason for ending the proposed date range in around 100 CE is because these scholars are looking at an important piece of external evidence, which are the written works of Ignatius, the Bishop of Antioch and a martyr (Duling and Perrin, 332). The reason this is significant is because “the earliest surviving writings which quote this Gospel are probably the letters of Ignatius, the Bishop of Antioch, who, while being taken as a prisoner from the East to Rome about AD 110, wrote to various churches in Asia Minor and to the church at Rome” (Fenton, 11). This leads scholars to believe that Ignatius had read and was familiar with Matthew. As a result, the Gospel must have been composed before 110 CE. It is important to point out that there are scholars, such as Paul Minear, who argue that Matthew was composed in 110 CE, though this is very unlikely (Elwell and Yarbrough, 79).

Another indication that the Gospel was probably written before 110 CE is because Ignatius makes reference to a number of events that are specific only to Matthew. One such event is the star that materializes during the moment of Jesus’ birth. Matthew writes, “When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy” (Matthew 2:9-10).

Another event is specific to Matthew that Ignatius makes reference to is the conversation that happens between Jesus and John the Baptist before he baptizes Him in the Jordan River. This conversation can be found in Matthew 4:13-15, which reads,

“Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?’ But Jesus answered him, ‘Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then he [Saint John the Baptist] consented” (Matthew 4:13-15).

The final piece of information found in Ignatius’ writings that are found only in Matthew, consists of a few of Jesus’ proverbs. These sayings include the one found in Matthew 12:33, which reads, “‘Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree bad, and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit’” (Matthew 12:33). Another proverb is the one located in Matthew 15:13 that states, “He answered, ‘Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted’ (Matthew 15:13).

The last proverb found only in Matthew to which Ignatius makes reference is the one found in Matthew 19:12, which states, “...For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can” (Matthew 19:12).

Since these sayings are only found in Matthew and are cited in Ignatius’ work, a very strong case can be made that Ignatius was familiar with the Gospel of Matthew. Furthermore, it might also be true that the audience that Ignatius is writing to was familiar with the Gospel of Matthew (Fenton, 11). As a result, Matthew had to have been written before 110 CE. It was most likely no later than 100 CE, allowing the Gospel to gain authority and recognition (Duling and Perrin, 332).

Internal Evidence

The internal evidence further guides scholars to determining the composition date of Matthew. According to the Gospel itself, some scholars argue that the work was written after the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem in 70 CE (Argyle, 17). Following this information, scholars deduce that Matthew was probably written a few years after the fact, probably around 80 CE to 90 CE, but no later than the year 100 CE (Earle, 21 and Harrington, 8). This allows the author of Matthew time to read Mark, believed by scholars who support a later dating of Mark's Gospel to have been written around the year 70 CE, and use it in his own Gospel (Argyle, 17).

In order to support their claim that Matthew was written after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 CE, scholars look to the text itself for supportive evidence. It is argued that Matthew 22:7 supports this claim, which states "...The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city... (Matthew 22:7)." Many scholars interpret this as the burning of Jerusalem in the year 70 CE. This would support the theory that Matthew's Gospel was written after the year 70 CE (Freed, 118).

Another supportive passage that is looked at is found in Matthew 24:1-2, which reads, "As Jesus came out of the temple and was going away, his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. Then he asked them, 'You see all these, do you not? Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down'" (Matthew 24:1-2). Many have claimed that these verses talk about the destruction of the Temple, which happened in 70 CE. The author of Matthew must have known about its destruction and put it in the text in a false prophetic tone. The reason it

is false is because the destruction has already happened. As a result, this leads scholars to believe that the text was written after the year 70 CE (Reid, 6).

Along with Matthew 22:7 and Matthew 24:1-2, scholars who support a composition date after 70 CE also look at the general worldview that the author of Matthew reflects in his writings. A number of scholars draw attention to how the author of Matthew's Gospel tends to have similar viewpoints to those of rabbis. This is significant because the "rabbinic movement began achieving prominence only after 70" CE due to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (Keener, 43). Even with this established, many scholars point out that a good portion of your everyday Galilean was not conscious of the general views of the rabbis, due to various factors such as the turbulent events surrounding the people of the time (Kenner, 43).

Many scholars point out that the Gospel of Matthew has an intense anti-Jewish underlying tone throughout many of its pages. For example, all through Chapter 6, the author of Matthew instructs and lectures the people "not to do *as the hypocrites do*" (Fenton, 11). An illustration of this is found in Matthew 6:2, which states, "'So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, *as the hypocrites do* in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward..." (Matthew 6:2). Another "hypocrites" model can be found in Matthew 6:5, which reads, "'And whenever you pray, *do not be like the hypocrites*; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward..." (Matthew 6:5). The final example is found in Matthew 6:16, which asserts, "'And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces

so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward...” (Matthew 6:16).

Aside from Chapter 6, Matthew 23 also has a fervent anti-Jewish tone all the way through. In Chapter 23, the author of the Gospel of Matthew directly chastises the scribes and Pharisees and most of the verses in the chapter start with the phrase, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” (Matthew 23). There are various examples of this occurrence all throughout Matthew 23, but a really good example can be found in Matthew 23:15, which states, “*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cross sea and land to make a single convert, and you make the new convert twice as much a child of hell as yourselves*” (Matthew 23:15). Another strong illustration is found in Matthew 23:27-28, which reads, ““*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like white-washed tombs, which on the outside look beautiful, but inside they are full of the bones of the dead and of all kinds of filth. So you also on the outside look righteous to others, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness*” (Matthew 23:27-28). These are just a few examples of “the seven woes against the scribes and the Pharisees” found all throughout Chapter 23 from the Gospel of Matthew (Montague, 8).

The anti-Jewish tone found in Matthew may be due to certain outcomes that happened after the year 70 CE as a result of the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem by the Romans. One such important outcome is the fact that the Pharisees were the only Jewish party to stay in existence. As a result of this, the Pharisees assumed the responsibilities of the spiritual leaders of the community. It is alleged that during the period after the destruction of both Jerusalem and the Temple, Jewish Christians continued to visit Jewish synagogues for prayer (Montague, 7).

Their time spent in the synagogues would not last for very long due to the fact that it became very challenging for the two parties to get along. This is because the Pharisees were trying to attain control of the spiritual needs of the Jewish people, while at the same time trying to achieve authority over the faith. It particularly became difficult “after the rabbis reformulated for the synagogue liturgy a prayer, the ‘Twelfth Benediction,’ that in some versions apparently included Christians among the heretics it cursed” (Clarke, xxii-xxiii).

Eventually, after a period of steady incremental growth in hostilities between the Jewish Christians and the Jewish people, around the year 85 CE, the Jewish synagogues prevented Christians from entering their establishments and considered Christians to be unacceptable and unwelcome. These actions would indicate that Matthew had to be written sometime after the year 85 CE in order to reflect these events. In order to support this claim, scholars look to certain verses throughout Matthew where the author “often speaks of *their synagogue*, as if to distinguish Christian meetings and meeting-places from those of the Jews, from which the Christians had now been turned out” (Fenton, 11).

The phrase *their synagogue* can be found as early as Matthew 4:23, which says, “Jesus’ went throughout Galilee, teaching in *their synagogues* and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people” (Matthew 4:23). Another instance, where the phrase *their synagogues* is used, can be found in Matthew 10:17, which reads, “Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in *their synagogues*,” (Matthew 10:17). The phrase *their synagogues* can also be found in Matthew 13:54, which states, “He came to his hometown and began to teach the people in *their synagogue*, so that they were astounded

and said, ‘Where did this man get this wisdom and these deeds of power?’” (Matthew 10:54). Further examples of the saying *their synagogues* can be found in Matthew 9:35 and Matthew 12:9.

In summary, looking at the Gospel itself, scholars have pointed out the deep and strong anti-Jewish tone that the text takes. This is most likely a reaction to the fact that Jewish synagogues expelled Christians from their institutions and looked down upon them. These events happened around the year 85 CE. In other words, by looking at internal evidence within the text, scholars are able to establish a starting point for a date range on when the Gospel According to Saint Matthew was written. The range ends about 100 CE to 105 CE. The way this prediction is reached is by looking at external evidence (Fenton, 11).

The main form of external evidence to support this claim comes from the ancient writings the Bishop of Antioch, known as Ignatius. In Ignatius’ works, scholars have found instances where he makes references to specific verses found only in the Gospel According to Saint Matthew. This leads scholars to believe that Ignatius, and probably his audience, must have been familiar with Matthew. As a result, Matthew had to have been written before 110 CE, which is the date given to Ignatius’ letters. Thus in conclusion, the date range reflective of these arguments discussed above is that Matthew was probably composed between 80 CE and 105 CE (Fenton, 11).

BEFORE THE TEMPLE’S DESTRUCTION IN 70 CE

Scholars who argue for an earlier dating are usually arguing for a date before 70 CE. The main focus of these scholars is that the author of the Gospel According to Saint Matthew is writing before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 CE. The

scholars in this camp look at both external and internal evidence to come up with the estimated date, which is between 50 and 64 CE (Robinson, 104).

External Evidence

Papias, who Eusebius identifies as the “Bishop Papias of Hierapolis in Asia Minor” is recognized as one of the Christian Church’s early leaders (Duling and Perrin, 296). It is believed that Papias’ works were composed during the second century. His five books written in about 130 CE were called *Interpretations of the Sayings of the Lord* and are available to us only through the various portions that have been quoted by later scholars, such as Irenaeus and Eusebius of Caesarea. If it were not for the text vanishing from existence, *Interpretations of the Sayings of the Lord* would be considered a leading authoritative text on Jesus’ sayings. Papias’ authority comes from the fact that his information comes from John the Presbyter (Duling and Perrin, 296).

Ancient writers such as Papias, who is quoted by Eusebius, and Irenaeus discuss in their respected manuscripts that Matthew was written in either Hebrew or Aramaic. This is important because the version of Matthew that scholars currently have possession of is written in the Greek language. Furthermore, this Greek version is the one that is recurrently quoted by the Early Church’s manuscripts. As a result, scholars deduce that the “Hebrew/Aramaic version [of Matthew was] no longer in existence, [and] predates the canonical Greek Gospel” (Hahn and Mitch, 13). Many scholars believe that this pre-Greek version of the Gospel of Matthew was most likely written before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 CE.

Internal Evidence

The biggest piece of internal evidence that supports a date before 70 CE, is Chapter 24. In this chapter, the author of Matthew is writing in a prophetic tone. In it the reader finds Jesus prophesizing about his Second Coming. In the same chapter, the author states that Jesus is also prophesizing about the destruction of Jerusalem, which happens in the year 70 CE. The way that the author presents the material leads the reader to believe that the events have not yet occurred and the statement is said in a visionary manner (Coffman, vii). Furthermore, since the author of Matthew reports “Jesus’ Olivet Discourse,” in which Jesus predicts the destruction of both Jerusalem and Temple, one would additionally expect the author to mention or talk about the realization of Jesus’ prophecies. But since such information is not included, scholars interpret the omission as an indication that the events have not yet taken place. As a result, the text had to have been written before the events, which take place in the year 70 CE (Hahn and Mitch, 13).

Another internal indication that Matthew was written before 70 CE is found in Matthew 17: 24-27, which states:

When they reached Capernaum, the collectors of the temple tax came to Peter and said, “Does your teacher not pay the temple tax?” He said, “Yes, he does.” And when he came home, Jesus spoke of it first, asking, “What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tribute? From their children or from others?” When Peter said, “From others,” Jesus said to him, “Then the children are free. However, so that we do not give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook; take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a coin; take that and give it to them for you and me” (Matthew 17: 24-27).

The fact that Matthew 17: 24-27 is discussing the “half-shekel tax for upkeep of the temple,” leads a group of scholars to believe that the Temple has not yet been destroyed

by the Romans, therefore, the author of Matthew must have written the Gospel before 70 CE (Robinson, 104). Furthermore, the verse quoted above reflects that the main point of Jesus' teaching that even though Christians feel that they do not have to pay the temple tax, Jesus is saying that they should do so, in order to avoid any type of future conflicts. Another important point is that Jesus is trying to prevent inciting a situation that could lead to rift. Therefore, the segregation of Christians in about 85 CE has not yet happened, leading scholars to believe that the author of Matthew is writing at an earlier date (Robinson, 104).

A final internal indication that Matthew was written before 70 CE is the tone of the text as a whole. Throughout the text the author of Matthew frequently refers to the Temple and the events associated with the Temple as in operation. Therefore, this leads the reader to believe that the Temple has not yet destroyed and it is still being used by the people. Furthermore, this probably indicates that Jerusalem has not yet been destroyed by the Romans (Coffman, vii).

CONCLUSION

There are two main categories surrounding the possible dates of composition for Matthew, a date after 70 CE and a date before 70 CE. Each of these categories is supported by a variety of scholars who look at both external evidence and internal evidence to prove their proposed date range. Scholars who support a later date propose a date range between 80 CE and 100 CE. It is important to note that some scholars who support a later date for Matthew prefer a narrower range of 85 to 90 CE. Nevertheless, the key point for supporters of a later date range for the composition of Matthew is that the date reflects a range after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE by the Romans.

The second category consists of scholars who support an earlier date for the composition of Matthew. For the most part, the earlier date range, which consists of a pre-destruction date, looks at the years from about 50 CE to 64 CE. What is important to note about these scholars who support the earlier date range for the composition of Matthew, is that they believe that Matthew was written before the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT MARK

INTRODUCTION

The debate over the composition of the Gospel of Saint Mark often involves discussion not only of who wrote it but also where it was written. While there are some scholars who strongly believe that the place of composition affects the date of the Gospel, for the purpose of this thesis paper, the focus is going to be on the debates that surround the date of composition of the Gospel According to Saint Mark.

In general, the debate concerning the date of Mark is divided into three main categories, which are late, intermediate, and early dating. Scholars who support the later dating place the date of Mark after the year 70 CE, many times sometime between 70 CE and 75 CE. Scholars who support the intermediate dating place the date of the Gospel of Mark between 60-70 CE. Scholars who support the earlier dating place the date of Mark within a range from 40 CE to 60 CE (Hengel, 1-2 and Moloney, 15).

LATER DATING: AFTER THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE

Scholars who support the later dating of Mark usually place the Gospel's composition date to have been about 70 CE to 75 CE. The scholars who support the later dating of Mark stress that the Gospel was written after the death of Saint Peter and Saint Paul and shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in the year 70 CE. As far as the evidence that concerns the death of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, these scholars pretty much use the same evidence that the scholars of the intermediate dating use to prove that Saint Mark was writing the Gospel after their deaths. But what is different is that the scholars of the later dating believe the Gospel was composed after the destruction

of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 CE, while the supporters of the intermediate dating place the time range before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 CE.

Papias Tradition

Interestingly enough, those who support the later dating of Mark deal with the Papias tradition as well, but point out how the Papias tradition is problematic. The Papias tradition is usually used to support a dating prior to the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE (Duling and Perrin, 298). The supporters for later dating take this argument, break it down, examine it, and argue the areas where the tradition is faulty. Consequently, the evidence is made to support a later date instead of an earlier date.

The first problem these scholars point out from the Papias tradition is the way Mark is described. One finds this description in Eusebius of Caesarea's *Historia Ecclesiastica* in a portion quoted from Papias, which states:

...when Mark became Peter's interpreter, he wrote down accurately, though by no means in order, as much as he remembered of the words and deeds of the Lord; for he had neither heard the Lord nor been in his company, but subsequently joined Peter as I said. Now Peter did not intend to give a complete exposition of the Lord's ministry but delivered his instructions to meet the needs of the moment. It follows, then, that Mark was guilty of no blunder if he wrote, simply to the best of his recollections, an incomplete account... (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.15 quoted in Moloney, 11).

On a side note, while in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* Mark is named as the author of the Gospel of Mark, many believe that the Gospel of Mark is pseudonymous. It is argued that Papias' description of Mark the author of the Gospel is self-protective or shielding in the way the text states that "Mark became Peter's interpreter, he wrote down accurately..." (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.15 quoted in Moloney, 11). This is

self-protective in the way that it gives the author of Mark authority because it places him as Peter's interpreter and the text states he wrote it without error. The interesting part is what follows, which says "...though by no means in order, as much as he remembered of the words of the Lord..." (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.15 quoted in Moloney, 11). This portion of the text almost excuses the author of the Gospel of Mark if there are any errors due to misplacement of information, which is another way in which Papias' description of Mark the author protects the Gospel's author from possible criticism.

Scholars who do not support the Papias tradition feel that this piece of information, which is quoted above, makes the description of Mark appear suspicious, causing them to be apprehensive and believe that the main purpose of the description is to perhaps give the Gospel of Mark "authority [by using words and phrases such as] 'accurately'; 'erred in nothing'; 'not to omit...or falsify'" (Duling and Perrin, 298). It is important to point out that these words and phrases that cause the supporters of the later dating to be apprehensive and suspicious about the Papias tradition, could very well be additions to Papias' words by Eusebius. Unfortunately, this issue is not addressed, but makes room for speculation.

It is interesting that scholars who argue against the validity of the Papias tradition point out that Mark was not a disciple, even though most of them do not believe that it was Mark who wrote the Gospel According to Saint Mark to begin with (Duling and Perrin, 298). The reason they argue Mark's status is not because they believe in his authorship, but seems to be because those that support the Papias tradition assume Mark's authorship and authority. As a result, they probably feel it is important to raise the issue of Mark's status even though they do not believe that Mark wrote the gospel, but because

the scholars who support the Papias tradition use Mark's authorship as a basis for support.

In regards to Mark's status, these scholars point out that Mark was not a disciple. As a result, Mark's connection to Jesus can only be found through a created "'chain' of tradition" (Duling and Perrin, 298). The connection goes as follows: Mark was a disciple of Peter, who was a disciple of Jesus, who is the main character of the Gospel of Mark. Therefore, Mark is a disciple of a disciple and not directly connected to Jesus. Information can be skewed when it does not come directly from the source, in this case Jesus. Since Mark did not get his information directly from Jesus, but from Peter, then the information's validity is in question (Duling and Perrin, 298). Although it is important to point out that "'chain' of tradition" is only one test of validity, even if it were Saint Peter who was writing and not Mark, the information would still be subject to validity arguments because Saint Peter could change things to favor his opinions or viewpoints (Duling and Perrin, 298).

Mark 13:14

As far as internal evidence is concerned, many scholars look to the verse Mark 13:14 which states, "But when you see the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be (let the reader understand), then those in Judea must flee to the mountains..." (Mark 13:14). Scholars who support a date for Mark after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE argue that the phrase "desolating sacrilege" refers to the "polluting presence of the Roman general Titus in the Temple in 70 CE" (Duling and Perrin, 298). The fact that Titus' presence was in the Temple was considered to taint the Temple, which reflects the "sacrilege" part of the phrase "desolating sacrilege" (Mark 13:14). Then under Titus, the

Romans soldiers caused the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, which reflects the “desolating” part of the phrase “desolating sacrilege” (Mark 13:14).

This verse is important because it is the subject of much debate. But basically it comes down to two sides: either the verse is a prophecy, or it is a fake prediction of events written after the actual event happened. Supporters of the later dating tend to support the latter. These scholars tend to classify the author of the Gospel of Mark to be an “apocalyptic writer” (Duling and Perrin, 298). These types of writers tend to “portray their characters as predicting events that [have already] happened” (Duling and Perrin, 298).

Mark 13

In order to support their claim that the Gospel of Mark was written after the year 70 CE, scholars who defend the later dating of Mark’s Gospel look at Mark 13 as proof of their claim. In reality, interpretation of Mark 13 can be seen as either supportive of a date prior to 70 CE or of a date after 70 CE (Donahue and Harrington, 43). One can interpret the passage as a prophecy that later comes true or that the author was writing with knowledge that Jerusalem and the temple did fall in the year 70 CE. As a result, just as the supporters of an earlier dating and the supporters of an intermediate dating are working with evidence considered to be inconclusive by many scholars, so are the supporters of a later dating of the Gospel of Mark (Moloney, 13).

INTERMEDIATE DATING: AFTER SAINT PETER’S AND SAINT PAUL’S DEATH

As mentioned earlier, the discussion revolving the date of the Gospel of Mark has led scholars to be divided into three main categories. In general, those arguing for an

intermediate date believe Mark to have been written prior to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in the year 70 CE, more specifically between the years 60 CE to 70 CE (Donahue and Harrington, 41). While this group of scholars tends to agree that the range of the date ends in 69/70 CE, most disagree concerning the beginning. There is a main group which thinks that the range goes from about 64 CE to 70 CE, while there are some scholars who prefer a smaller range from about 68 CE to 70 CE (The Anchor Bible Dictionary, 543 and Schnelle, 202). Again, these scholars' main argument is that the date of Mark is before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 CE and is after the death of Saint Peter and Saint Paul.

THE DEATH OF SAINT PETER AND SAINT PAUL

One of the important points when dating the Gospels is the mention of the deaths of Peter and Paul in relation to the composition date of Mark. The reason their deaths are so important is because most scholars agree on the estimated date of their deaths. It is commonly believed that Peter and Paul died as martyrs as a result of being persecuted in Rome. Their martyrdom is understood to have happened after the great fire, which took place in the year 64 CE. As a result, the early authorities of the Christian Church usually identify the composition of the Mark to have occurred in the late 60's and sometimes in the early 70's, due to the belief that Saint Peter and Saint Paul died after the great fire of 64 CE (Donahue and Harrington, 42).

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE

Scholars who support the intermediate dating of Mark (60 CE to 70 CE), usually look to the writings of scholars who have also had a great impact in the shaping and writing of the early Christian Church's history as external evidence, just as do the

scholars who support the earlier dating of the Gospel. Scholars look at the information from people such as Papias and Irenaeus. Besides the fact that these sources were also influential in recording the history of the early Christian Church, they also had an influence on the early Christian Church's theology. These sources provide information which scholars who support the intermediate dating of Mark use to defend their claim.

Papias and Irenaeus

Eusebius of Caesarea's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which means Ecclesiastical History or Church History, quotes a portion from Papias:

This also the elder used to say. When Mark became Peter's interpreter, he wrote down accurately, though by no means in order, as much as he remembered of the words and deeds of the Lord; for he had neither heard the Lord nor been in his company, but subsequently joined Peter as I said. Now Peter did not intend to give a complete exposition of the Lord's ministry but delivered his instructions to meet the needs of the moment. It follows, then, that Mark was guilty of no blunder if he wrote, simply to the best of his recollections, an incomplete account (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.15 quoted in Moloney, 11).

This extract leaves the reader without a definite answer as to whether Mark was written while Saint Peter was alive or not. On the one hand, if Saint Peter was still living at the time of composition, then one possible presumption as to why Saint Peter did not help Saint Mark compose the Gospel in order to make the text more whole or complete, is that Saint Mark and Saint Peter did not live with each other. On the other hand, if Saint Peter was not alive, then it would be obvious why Saint Peter could not help Saint Mark compose the work. In addition, the extract does not tell the reader where Mark was written (Harnack, 127). Supporters of an intermediate date lean towards the explanation

that Saint Peter was already dead, and unable to assist Mark. Consequently, supporters of an earlier date tend to agree that Saint Peter and Saint Mark were not living together.

In Irenaeus' five volume text, *Adversus Haereses* (against heresy), one finds an interesting passage in which Irenaeus states that:

'Matthew composed his Gospel among the Hebrews in their own language, while Peter and Paul proclaimed the Gospel in Rome and founded the community. After their death Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, transmitted his preaching to us in written form. And Luke, who was Paul's follower, set down in a book the gospel which he preached. Then John, the Lord's disciple, who had reclined on his breast, himself produced the Gospel when he was staying at Ephesus, in the province of Asia' (quoted in Hengel, 2).

According to the passage above, one can infer the order of the Synoptic Gospels is Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Furthermore, according to Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses* (against heresy), supporters of an intermediate date range add that the author of Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark after the deaths of Saint Peter and Saint Paul.

It would seem that Irenaeus recognizes that Papias' writings indicate that Saint Mark composed his Gospel by reminiscing on past events after Saint Peter and Saint Paul died. This explains why Saint Peter was not able to help Saint Mark write a more complete Gospel or at least provide some kind of indication of his consent to the Gospel's composition. If Mark was written during Saint Peter's life span then we would expect to come across either an indication of Saint Peter's consent of the Gospel or at least a more comprehensive Gospel (Hengel, 2). Either one of these two possibilities would be credible proof of Saint Peter helping in the composition of the Gospel.

In *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Eusebius of Caesarea records a statement made by Irenaeus in which he says, "After the departure of [Peter and Paul] Mark...handed down

to us in writing the things preached by Peter” (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* V.8.2-4 quoted in Elwell and Yarbrough, 89). The problem with this phrase is the word departure. Departure could mean death or it could mean the simple fact that Saint Peter and Saint Paul left the area. Supporters of a writing date for Mark after the death of Saint Peter and Saint Paul will take the word departure to mean death. Those who support an earlier dating take departure in the sense that Saint Peter and Saint Paul left the area.

The latter claim is probably more accurate because it does not conflict with Clement of Alexandria’s testimony as documented in Eusebius’ *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which states that the author of Mark wrote the Gospel while Saint Peter was still alive (Elwell and Yarbrough, 89). As a result, the word “departure” found in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* V.8.2-4, probably means to leave the area instead of death, which is what the supporters of a composition date after the death of Saint Peter and Saint Paul interpret the word to represent.

INTERNAL EVIDENCE

There are four main themes found in Mark, which are considered to be strong indicators of the sacred text being composed in the late 60’s. These four themes are: “opposition from powerful leaders, divisions among Jesus’ followers, persecutions, and betrayals” (Donahue and Harrington, 43). The reason these specific themes are important and serve as indicators in dating the Gospel of Mark is because these four themes fit the time period of the late 60’s very well. During this period of time, the people of the early Christian community were enduring suffering and pain for their faith. Many of these people were ready to endure more pain and affliction, which they acknowledged would most likely happen. As a result, these themes become significant to these groups of

people, who were living during the time of the great fire in Rome of 64 CE and the fierce persecutions afterwards (Donahue and Harrington, 43).

Opposition from Powerful Leaders

Throughout the pages of the Gospel of Mark, the audience is made aware that many of Jesus' actions provoke opposition from powerful leaders such as the Sanhedrin, the Pharisees, and the Herodians. In Mark 14:63-64, which states, "Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, 'Why do we still need witnesses? You have heard his blasphemy! What is your decision?' All of them condemned him as deserving death," the audience encounters the opposition coming from the Sanhedrin camp, in which the Sanhedrin charges Jesus with blasphemy, a charge seen in an earlier chapter (Mark 14: 63-64). This earlier charge of blasphemy is found in Mark 2:1-12, after Jesus heals a paralyzed man, when the scribes declare that Jesus' message about the forgiveness of sins is blasphemy.

While the Sanhedrin placed Jesus under trial, the Pharisees and the Herodians showed their opposition towards him in a different manner. In Mark 3:6, which states, "The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him," the audience finds out that the Pharisees and the Herodians show their opposition towards Jesus by devising a scheme to eliminate Jesus (Mark 3:6).

In addition to the Sanhedrin, the Pharisees, and the Herodians, the chief priests of the Temple also express a strong opposition to Jesus. What is interesting is that the chief priests' opposition and initiative for action is suppressed for fear of the crowd. Three important examples are found in Mark 11:18, Mark 12:12, and Mark 14:1. In these passages, we find the chief priests expressing strong opposition for Jesus' teachings and

his preaching, but failing to act on their feelings due to the fact that they fear the crowd. Every time the chief priests decide to arrest Jesus, the fear of the crowd's reaction does not allow them to act on their wish (Donahue and Harrington, 42).

Divisions among Jesus' Followers

The theme of divisions among Jesus' followers is a theme that is found throughout the Gospel of Mark. The best known example is that of Judas Iscariot. Judas Iscariot was one of Jesus' disciples, but he ended up betraying Jesus to the authorities. Judas' betrayal divided him from the rest of the disciples and in turn caused division among the disciples as well. Another example is Jesus' family. In Mark 3:20-21, the audience discovers that instead of Jesus' family supporting Him, they are suspicious of his actions and believe that Jesus is probably going crazy. A third example that is connected with his family's suspicious nature is the "disbelief from the people of his hometown" found in Mark 6:1-6 (Donahue and Harrington, 43). Finally, division is found among his disciples due to many misconceptions over the issue of Jesus' role as the Messiah. The divisions among the disciples finally include betrayal, which is a major theme in Mark, and denial (Donahue and Harrington, 43).

Persecutions

Persecution is actually one of the leading themes in Mark. In Mark 13:9-13, one finds an eschatological discussion by Jesus. In this discussion, Jesus notifies and alerts his disciples of two important unavoidable, future events: persecutions and trials. Jesus informs his disciples that the good news would be delivered to every single nation. Part of the way in which the good news would be spread was through the persecutions and trials the disciples and the faithful would have to endure (Donahue and Harrington, 43).

This is essential because for the end to come, first the good news needs to be spread to all nations. In the process of spreading the good news, the disciples are given notice that they and the faithful will suffer from persecutions and trials as a result of their faith, but this is part of the manner in which the good news will be spread (Weaver, 124).

Betrayals

Besides persecutions, Jesus also forewarns his disciples of another reality in Mark 13:9-13. This time Jesus warns his disciples about betrayals. This warning about betrayals can specifically be found in the passage Mark 13:12, which states: “Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death” (Mark 13:12). Another important passage that deals with the issue of betrayal is Mark 14:66-72. In this passage, one finds Peter denying Jesus not once, but three times. This event turns into a symbolic event “for all those [people] who betray Jesus and their fellow Christians” (Donahue and Harrington, 43).

EARLIER DATING BEFORE SAINT PETER’S DEATH

Scholars who argue for an earlier dating are usually arguing for a date around 50 CE to 67 CE. The scholars in this camp look at external and internal evidence to come up with this estimated time range. The reason that the range starts about 50 CE is because the audience is presumed to be a Roman audience, and Saint Paul arrived in Europe around 50/51 CE. The audience is thought to be Roman because the content of Mark’s Gospel has many themes that would appeal to and reflect the Romans of this time period. Furthermore, the belief that the Mark’s audience is Roman is a reflection of the

“early patristic tradition,” which includes the belief that Mark “was probably written for the use of the Church in Rome” (Donahue and Harrington, 44 and Taylor, 32).

The range ends in about 67 CE because these scholars believe that Saint Mark wrote the Gospel before the death of Saint Peter, which some argue could have happened after the great fire of 64 CE or during the year 67 CE (Donahue and Harrington, 42). The main supposition of these scholars is that Saint Peter is not dead while Saint Mark is writing the Gospel. Thus, many scholars feel the need to explain why the Gospel is not as complete as it would be if Saint Peter had helped Saint Mark. Scholars who defend a later date usually point out that Saint Peter is dead, which is the reason for him not helping Saint Mark in the composition of the Gospel.

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE

Scholars who support the earlier dating of Mark’s Gospel (50 CE to 67 CE), usually look for external evidence by looking at the early Christian sources who have had a great impact in the shaping and writing of the early Christian Church’s history. Scholars look at the statements of people such as Papias, Saint Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Eusebius. Besides the fact that these writers were influential in recording the history of the early Christian Church, they also provide information which scholars who support the earlier dating of Mark’s Gospel use to defend their claim.

Saint Clement of Alexandria

Saint Clement of Alexandria, who was born sometime during the middle of the second century and is believed to have died between the years 211 and 216, wrote a book titled *Hypotyposes*. In it, he makes mention that the two Gospels which include a genealogy of Jesus were the ones that were composed first. Therefore, according to Saint

Clement of Alexandria the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke were the first Gospels composed. In *Hypotyposes*, Saint Clement of Alexandria also alludes to when he believed the Gospel of Mark was written. According to the text:

When Peter proclaimed the word publicly in Rome and presented the gospel in the power of the spirit, the many people here asked Mark to write down what had been said, because he had long been a companion of Peter and had remembered his words. Mark did this and handed over the Gospel to those who had asked for it. When Peter learned of this he neither intervened with an admonition nor encouraged it (quoted in Hengel, 4).

According to the passage quoted above from Saint Clement of Alexandria's *Hypotyposes*, it seems that Saint Peter knew of the Gospel of Mark, but chose to neither advocate nor oppose the text. It is also important to note that in a later section of the text, Saint Clement states that the reason Saint Peter chose not to act was because he wanted to make the Gospel of John stand out more and be more authoritative (Hengel, 4).

The reason this is important is because scholars who support an earlier date for John, such as J.A.T. Robinson who argues for 65 CE and L. Morris who argues for 70 CE, place the composition of John between the years 60-70 (Morris 59 and Robinson 284, 307). Those who date John later, such as C.K. Barrett who suggests the year 90 as the composition date, argue for a range of 90 CE to 100 CE (Barrett 127-128 and Robinson, 254). As a result, since Mark is thought to have been written before John, this causes Mark to have a date that reflects this belief.

Origen

In his writings, Origen, one of the early Christian Church's Fathers, who was born in the year 185 CE and died in 254 CE, takes Saint Clement's works a step further and

supports the Gospel of Mark's authority. He does this by disagreeing with Saint Clement's proposed chain of composition of the Gospels. According to Saint Clement, the order of composition from the first synoptic to be written to the last one to be composed is: Matthew, Luke, Mark, and John. Contrary to this, Origen takes this sequence and challenges it by proposing that the real order is: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Origen defends his position by stating that "'The (Gospel) according to Mark was (written) second, as Peter instructed him'" (quoted in Hengel, 4).

The difference between Saint Clement and Origen's order of composition is which Gospels they believe to have been written second and third. In other words, they disagree in the chronological placement of Mark and Luke. Saint Clement places Luke second and Mark third, while Origen inverts that belief. This is important because it reflects the belief that Mark was written before Luke, therefore, being written at an earlier date. More important, Origen points out the one of the reasons Mark is earlier than Luke is because Saint Peter orders it to be written second. This leads scholars to believe that Saint Peter is still alive, therefore, placing the composition of Mark before his death.

Eusebius

Like Saint Clement of Alexandria and Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea (275 CE – 339 CE), also suggests an early date for the composition of Mark, specifically one that reflects that Saint Peter has not died yet and is still alive. In his texts, Eusebius of Caesarea states that Saint Peter arrives in Rome during the reign of Claudius, who ruled from the year 41 till his death in 54. The reason Saint Peter goes to Rome is to confront Simon Magus and fight against him in order to stop him. As told by Justin's *Apology*, during Claudius' reign Simon Magus had captivated and charmed the Romans through

his supernatural abilities to the point that they started to honor him as a god. It is after this that Saint Peter's companion, Saint Mark, composed the Gospel of Mark. "After that he is said 'to have been sent to Egypt and to have been the first to proclaim the Gospel which he had written,' with resounding success" (Hengel, 5).

The information stated above is validated in the manuscript titled *Chronicon Hieronymi*, which describes how Saint Peter arrives in Rome after the establishment of the church in Antioch (Hengel 121). The establishment in Antioch occurred in the second year of Claudius, although some documents suggest it could have happened during the first year of Claudius. In either case, we are looking at events that happened around the year 42 CE (Hengel, 5).

So according to these calculations, the second year of Claudius happens in about 42/43 CE because it falls about ten years after the ascension, which occurred in the year 32/33 CE. The reason this is known is because the Gospel of John states that Jesus' ministry lasted three years. And since we are using Luke as a starting point, we know to start counting those three years from the year 28/29 CE, which is the fifteenth year of the emperor Tiberius. The reason this is known is because this is when John the Baptist, according to Luke chapter three, made his appearance (Hengel, 5). One of the reasons these dates are considered reliable is because it is calculated from a combination of both external evidence and internal evidence from the Gospel itself.

The calculation, which includes looking at the ten years after the ascension, is also discussed in Theophylact's *Commentary on the Gospels*. In this document, Theophylact discusses the dates of all four of the Gospels. He states that Matthew was written eight years after the ascension, resulting in the Gospel being written in 40/41 CE.

Then Mark was written ten years after the ascension, which places Mark being written in 42/43 CE. After that, Luke was written fifteen years after the ascension, causing Luke to have been written in 47/48 CE. Finally, John was written thirty-two years after the ascension, placing its composition in 64/65 CE. Theophylact adds that John was written after so many years had passed because Saint John wrote his Gospel “- after he had critically read the other three Gospels – ‘and he made good what they had omitted’” (Hengel, 6).

Another important event, which should be discussed, that Eusebius of Caesarea uses in his defense to the claim that Mark was written before the death of Saint Peter is the death of Saint Mark. Eusebius of Caesarea states that Saint Mark died about two years before Saint Peter, who is calculated to have died as a martyr along with Paul after the great fire in 64 CE (Donahue and Harrington, 42). According to him, Saint Mark “died in the eighth year of Nero (AD 62)” (Hengel, 6). As a result, Eusebius dates the Gospel of Mark to have been written before the year 62 CE.

Markan Priority, the Book of Acts, and the Gospel of Luke

As it was discussed in the first chapter, Markan priority dictates that Mark was written first and the information found in Mark was used years later by the Gospel of Luke. Using this logic, Mark would have to be placed before the composition of Luke. In the earlier chapters, which discussed the composition date of the Book of Acts and the Gospel of Luke, it was argued that Acts was written in 62 CE. This causes Luke to have been written before then, due to the fact that Saint Luke wrote both books, starting with the Gospel of Luke. It was also argued that Luke was most likely written between 58 CE to the early 60's CE. As a result of this, the composition of Mark has to be earlier than

Luke and Acts, most likely between the years 40 CE and 60 CE, probably no later than the mid 50's.

INTERNAL EVIDENCE

In Mark 15:21, the reader meets a man named Simon of Cyrene. Simon of Cyrene is identified as the father of Alexander and Rufus. The way Simon is identified by his sons instead of by the name of his father is strange. The most popular explanation is that the Gospel's audience knows who Alexander and Rufus are. What is interesting is that in Matthew and in Luke, the names of Alexander and Rufus are absent. This suggests that the audience of these two Gospels did not have any relations with Alexander and Rufus possibly because the time period is later and different (Hengel, 9). Therefore, due to the inclusion of the names Alexander and Rufus in Mark and the omission of the names in Matthew and in Luke, one can argue that Mark was written earlier, when the names were of more relevancy.

Another piece of internal evidence, which suggests an earlier dating for Mark, is the name of Pilate. In Mark, the author writes simply the name Pilate (Πιλατος). By doing this, the author of the Gospel presumes that the readers know who he is. In Matthew and in Luke, when the name Pilate appears, the label of governor is added to the name (Hengel, 9). This probably indicates that the audience of Matthew and those of Luke were not aware that Pilate was a governor and so had to be told. This suggests that Mark was written earlier than Matthew and Luke, because Saint Mark's audience knows that Pilate is governor and do not need to be told because he is a contemporary figure to Mark's audience.

A third piece of internal evidence, which suggests an earlier dating for Mark, is the way the Pharisees, Jews, and leaders of the masses are described. The way these groups of people are described in Mark reflects an earlier time than the way they are described in the other Gospels. For example, in John, we find these people as being “lumped together in a *massa perditionis*” (Hengel, 9). Furthermore, in Mark, the Pharisees and the scribes are not a typecasted, standardized unit as we see them described in Matthew. Instead, the scribes are described as a distinct group of people who frequently go to Galilee after studying the Torah in Jerusalem. This is important because before its destruction in 70 CE, the Temple was, without question, the best place to study the Torah. Also, the fact that the different groups are not typecasted and are described as being individual identities is evidence that Mark is written at an earlier date before they are placed in one general group (Hengel, 9).

CONCLUSION

There are three main categories surrounding the possible dates of composition for Mark, a later date, an intermediate date, and an early date. Each of these categories is supported by a variety of scholars who look at a range of material in order to support their claim and prove their point. In general, scholars that belong to the later dating category usually place the date of composition of Mark to be a few years after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. The later date range includes the years 70 CE through 75 CE.

The second category consists of scholars who support an intermediate date range. This date range places the composition date of Mark between 60 CE and 70 CE. In contrast to the supporters of the early date range, this group of scholars believes that Saint

Peter and Saint Paul have already died. These scholars who support the intermediate range also believe that Mark was written before the destruction of the Temple.

The final category is that of the earlier dating. In general, the early date range includes the years 40 to 60 CE. What is important to note about this group of scholars who support the early date range for the composition date of Mark is that they believe Mark was written before the death of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, as well as before the destruction of the Temple. In comparison to the intermediate date range, the earlier date range defends the belief that Mark was written before the destruction of the Temple. In contrast to the supporters of both the later and intermediate range, scholars who support the earlier date range propose that Mark was written before the death of Saint Peter and Paul.

After reviewing all three date ranges, the most likely proposed date is that Mark was written between 40 and 60 CE, which is the date range the supporters of the early category support. This date range incorporates what was concluded earlier that Acts was most likely written in 62 CE. As a result, Luke had to have been written before 62 CE, most likely between 58 CE to the early 60's CE. Therefore, since Luke uses Mark, this places the composition date of Mark to be earlier than Luke and Acts, most likely between the years 40 CE and 60 CE, probably no later than the mid 50's.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Introduction

In order to determine the dates of the Synoptic Gospels it is necessary to find some fixed point from which to begin. In most studies, that fixed point has been the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE. The usual thinking has been that since the Jesus of the Gospels predicts the destruction of the city and temple, the earliest Gospel must have been composed near the time when its destruction was at hand or very shortly after that time. Usually the date selected is 68 CE when the Romans laid siege to Jerusalem and its end could be foreseen. Then one's solution to the Synoptic problem is used to determine dates for the others. Contrary to this, I propose that the best starting point is the date of the Book of Acts of the Apostles, which can be placed at 62 CE.

Luke's Gospel is earlier and Mark's Gospel earlier still.

The Book of Acts

The starting point for this theory is looking at the date of Acts. Supporters who defend a later date argue for a date in the second century, primarily 100 CE to 130 CE. These scholars believe that works from the second century, such as Josephus, Joseph Martyr and Marcion, were used by the author of Acts during its time of composition. Two main problems with this belief is the fact that the Christology and the conception of Jesus' death are more primitive in Acts. These concepts are more developed in the works of these second century writers. As a result, this would reflect an earlier time period for the composition of Acts and not a later time.

There are also scholars who maintain that Acts was written in the 80's CE. Scholars who defend such a date are placed in the intermediate date range category. Those who belong to this group focus on the belief that Acts was written after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE and after the deaths of Saint Paul, Saint Peter, and Saint James. This position is defended by pointing out verses in the Gospels that make reference to the destruction of Jerusalem. These scholars claim that those events are false prophecies. In reality, the author of Acts knew of the events and was writing in a reflective tone. One problem with this theory is that they are dismissing the idea that predictive prophecies can happen. Another problem is that they are placing the date after the deaths of Paul, Peter, and James. The reason this is an issue is because their deaths would have been significant to the point that it would have been recorded, but they are not. This final point leads us to the earlier date.

Scholars who believe that Acts was written between the late 50's and 60's, most likely in 62 CE, believe that Acts was written before the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE and before the death of Saint Paul in 64/67 CE, Saint Peter in approximately 64 CE, and Saint James 62 CE. One of the reasons these scholars support such an early date is because they believe in prophetic prophecies. A second reason the date is so early is to reflect a date in which Paul, Peter, and James are still alive. This is important because it is theorized that the deaths of these important figures would have been documented if in fact the events would have already occurred. Since this information is omitted, then that must mean that they have not died yet. As a result, the most probable date for the composition of Acts is 62 CE.

Gospel of Luke

This information is important because the Gospel of Luke is believed to have been written before the composition of Acts. This is defended by various pieces of evidence found within both Luke and Acts. For example, the author of Luke and Acts are thought to be the same person due to the same writing style found in both books. Also, both books are addressed to the same person, Theophilus. Furthermore, in Acts 1:1 the author refers to what he wrote in the previous book, i.e. the Gospel of Luke. As a result of this, it is believed that Luke and Acts are written by the same person and that Luke comes before Acts.

Therefore, the most logical date for Luke would be before 62 CE, due to the fact that, as it was discussed earlier, this is the most probable date for the composition of Acts. This happens to be the position that the scholars who propose an earlier date for Luke defend. These scholars argue the point that Luke had to have been written before Acts, which was written before the death of Paul in 64 CE. Furthermore, Luke was most likely written in Caesarea during Paul's imprisonment. As a result, the composition of Luke is thought to have been between 58 CE to the early 60's CE.

Those who defend an intermediate date of 75 CE to 85 CE or a later date of 105 CE to 130 CE for Luke are unlikely to be true, due to the fact that these dates would place the composition of Acts later. It was proven earlier that Acts was most likely written in 62 CE. As a result, these intermediate and late dates leave room for speculation of why the author did not include important events such as the death of Peter, Paul, and James. It would be logical that the author would include such details, since they were important figures.

Furthermore, the author recounts how Paul was imprisoned, it would make more sense if the author were to tell about what happens to Paul and not just abruptly end the book. Therefore, it would be more probable that Paul has not yet died, which would point to an earlier date for Acts. An earlier date for the composition of Acts (62 CE) means an earlier date for the composition of Luke (58 CE to early 60's CE).

Gospel of Mark

If Acts was written in 62 CE and Luke was written between 58 CE and the early 60's CE, this would place the composition of Mark before the late 50's. This view goes hand in hand with the theory of Markan Priority. This theory states that Mark was the first Gospel written, followed by Matthew and Luke, who used the information found in Mark as a primary source to write their own Gospels. This theory is first justified by looking at the way Matthew and Luke share a great deal of information found in Mark, but do not share information within each other. This leads scholars to believe that Mark was written first and the authors of Matthew and Luke had access to Mark, allowing them to use the text as a source.

A second point that scholars look at is the way that the authors of Matthew and Luke follow Mark's sequence of events as a guideline in how to write their own Gospels. A third point looked at is the way Matthew and Luke duplicate many words and phrases that are found in Mark. Finally, parts that are found in either Matthew or Luke that are not found in Mark are considered to be additions and not omissions. It would make more sense for the authors of Matthew and Luke to add on to Mark's work and not take away from it. Taking into account that Mark was written first and Acts was written in 62 CE

with Luke being written between 58 CE and the early 60's, the most probable date for the composition of Mark would be between 40 CE to the late 50's CE.

Gospel of Matthew

Placing Matthew in the composition timeline is an interesting task. The reason this Gospel is interesting is because those scholars that date it early (40 CE to 45 CE), tend to follow the Augustinian hypothesis, which states that the order of the Gospels should be Matthew first, Mark second, and Luke third. In other words, scholars that date Matthew early do not follow Markan priority. Since in the very first chapter Markan priority was defended, a composition date for Matthew between the years 40 CE to 45 CE would be too early.

The later date range for Matthew would be after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE; scholars of this category propose a range of 80 CE to 100 CE. These scholars look at certain verses found within the Gospel itself for internal evidence to support that the Temple has already been destroyed. The intense anti-Jewish tone found in Chapters 6 and 23 is also an indication of the strong sentiments that arose between the Jews and the Christians after the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem by the Romans. Furthermore, certain verses that include the phrase *their synagogue* are seen as indications that the year is probably 85 CE, which is when the hostilities between the Jewish Christians and the Jewish people reached its limit and the Jewish people banned the Jewish Christians to enter the synagogues.

The problem with the later dating is that the anti-Jewish tone is not exclusive to this time era. It is not a secret that Jesus would frequently have strong discussions with Jewish leaders and other people of authority. Thus, it is a reoccurring theme that is also

reflected in Matthew and not necessarily reflective of the time period. Furthermore, the verses with the phrase *their synagogue* does not necessarily go hand in hand with the events of 85 CE. One of the reasons for this is because the rabbinic movement does not happen until the second century, which means that other people were running the synagogues. As a result, *their synagogue* is referring to another group of people. Some scholars believe that the Pharisees were running the synagogues, while the Sadducees ran the Temple. In reality, we really do not know for certain, mainly because places where information is gathered from, such as Josephus, do not say.

The intermediate date range for Matthew would be before 70 CE; these scholars propose a range of 50 CE to 64 CE. A number of the scholars who support this range believe that Matthew the Apostle wrote the Gospel of Matthew. The content of the Gospel is also looked at to support a date before the destruction of the Temple. For example, the prophetic tone the author uses in describing Jesus' Olivet Discourse and how the author does not mention that those events prophesized did happen, incline these scholars to believe that Matthew predates 70 CE. Also, throughout Matthew, the author refers to the Temple and events that are associated with it as if the Temple were still standing.

Furthermore, these scholars also look at certain verses, such as Matthew 17:24-27, which talks about the Temple tax. A discussion on the Temple tax would presume that the Temple is still in operation. Taking into account that Mark was written first between 40 CE to late 50 CE, Matthew could not have been written between 40 to 45 CE. Secondly, the inconclusive evidence given by supporters of a date after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE rules out the date range of 80 CE to 100 CE. As a result, the best

date for the composition of Matthew is the intermediate date range of 50 CE to 64 CE, which is supported by both internal and external evidence.

Composition Timeline

The final conclusion is that Mark was written first between 40 CE to late 50's CE, followed by Matthew being composed between 50 CE and 64 CE, and finally Luke being written down between 58 CE and early 60's CE. This timeline was constructed by first looking at how Acts was written in 62 CE and working backwards to reach Mark, which is believed to have been written first due to the Markan Priority Theory.

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