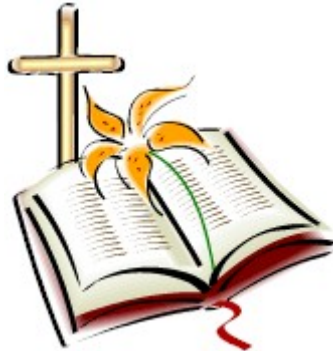


Bible Basics - The Gospels

Overview

New Testament literature reflects the Christian interpretation of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). Some effects and influences of the Gospels are as follows:

Catechism of Jesus: Until recently, the writers thought that the Gospel writers wanted to present us with a biography of Jesus. After much research, Bible scholars agree that the Gospel writers wanted to write catechisms or digests of Christian teaching concerning the risen Lord Jesus.



Theological Interpretations: The Gospel writers often used a typically Hebrew way of teaching by reflecting on events of the past. The writers took those narratives and frequently even remolded and refashioned them to bring out the lesson they wanted to teach.

In reading the Gospels, one should distinguish historical facts from theological elaboration. Bible scholars accept the fact that Jesus worked miracles. However, the miracle accounts of the Gospel are often more than a record of what actually happened as they also contain theological reflections.

Conflict stories: In these stories, the author lets his characters bring out his lesson. There were controversies, which supplied the background material for the conflict stories of the Gospels. They are literary forms used by the Gospel writers in their catechisms to bring out what they had to tell the opponents of early Christianity. Read Matthew 9:10-13; Luke 7:36-50; John 10:22-39; and Matthew 12:1-8.

Infancy narratives: The first chapters of Matthew and Luke are dedicated to Jesus' infancy and are slightly different since both authors have used traditions. The author of Matthew wanted to show Jesus as the Messiah and tied to David, since he was speaking to a Jewish audience. Luke was writing to the gentiles and uses the narrative to introduce many theological themes and to provide information that would not be known to the gentiles.

Communication: For example, John uses figures of speech. He calls Jesus God's word to those who are ignorant. He calls Him light to people who walk in darkness.

Sayings of Jesus: Since we do not possess a biography of Jesus, it is difficult to know whether the words or sayings are written exactly as He spoke them. The early Church expressed her teaching in the form of His sayings in the Gospels. Note that in "red-letter" bibles the words spoken by Jesus are in red print.

Bible scholars point to the very short sayings of Jesus. See Matthew in chapter 5:1-12. as they are examples. Early Christians, who had known Jesus, had His words often on their lips: "The Master used to say . . .".

Traditions Concerning the Resurrection: There is no doubt that Jesus died and was seen alive by many witnesses – as reported from both from the early church and from the secular community. However, the New Testament Gospel writers chose theological interpretations to teach what the risen Lord meant to believers – that is His life, death, resurrection and ascension.