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Digging Deeper

STUDYING THE GOSPELS AS THE GOSPEL AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

Rationale & Background

GOSPEL CONTEXT

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When the Christ came to earth as Jesus of Nazareth, times were tough. Believers felt abandoned; Rome was the ultimate sovereign, not the Lord God Almighty. People looked for a leader, a messiah, someone to break off the chains of civil and spiritual slavery. Many claimed to be this leader. Many died in these leaders' uprisings. Many were fooled. But then Yeshua came. This leader was different—He spoke with authority. He fed the hungry. He healed the ill. And, He taught the weirdest things: love your enemies, the poor are blessed, the teachers of the Law were not always correct, and most odd—He was the way, and the truth, and the life. Was this Yeshua from Nazareth God? A resounding “Yes” floated among and beyond believers and unbelievers alike. A new narrative indeed.

From the earliest days, the prospect of the Lord God coming to earth—actually being among us (*Immanuel*)—was shouted loudly. This good news was spoken with excitement, fervor and passion. In those days, people would gather in the market during the day, sharing the latest gossip. In the evening, people would gather in the cool of the evening, on their rooftop sharing family aspiration and angst. It was from those rooftops that the Christ called followers to “shout” what was whispered in your ear, what was told in the dark. What was to be shouted? The gospel.

JUST WHAT IS THE GOSPEL

Of course, the gospel is more than just the 4 books of the New Testament we call “gospels.” What Luke, Peter, Paul, John, James, and even Jude proffered gave us context for, implications of, and abundant meaning. Perhaps, a better title for what we call “Matthew, Mark, Luke” and “John” might be a *Quadratic Views of Yeshua the Messiah: How He Turned the World Upside Down*.

You see, when people “tell” the story, it’s important to get the story right. And from the second ascendancy to approximately 45AD, the good news was in all likelihood orally shared. So, starting probably with James, the oral narratives we call the New Testament were typically written down, in Greek—the language of international commerce and intercultural efficacy, a *lingua franca* as it were.

We’ve decided to study these four views simultaneously. Each author had different, yet amazingly similar narratives to share. Studying them separately allows unnecessary error to intrude. Studying them together will be challenging. It’ll be like listening to four uncles at thanksgiving simultaneously telling us stories about growing up with our grandfather. Each has a lot to offer; each has something distinctive; and some of their stories are fascinatingly different. Let us begin with context...

