

Christians and History: the Gospels

- What I am, and am not, going to argue ...



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 - Wearing two hats



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 - “Proving the Bible”



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- What I am, and am not, going to argue ...
 - Wearing two hats
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 - Using Case Studies



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 - “Proving the Bible”
 - Using Case Studies
 - Focussing on Jesus



Christians and History: the Gospels

- How Historians deal with the Gospels
 - Oral and Written Sources



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 - Comparison, in order to extrapolate back to before the Gospels were written



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 - “Criteria of Authenticity”

Christians and History: the Gospels

- How Historians deal with the Gospels
 - “Criteria of Authenticity”: rules of thumb.
 - Multiple independent attestation



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 - Clear context in the ministry of Jesus not duplicated later



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 - The “Criterion of Embarrassment”



Christians and History

- Case Study #1:
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 - Multiple attestation of forms: parables, sayings, miracle stories.

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 - John the Baptist, the Temple, the Law
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 - External evidence: Jewish and Graeco-Roman

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 - Prostitutes and corrupt public servants, Matthew 21:31-2, Mark 2:15-16, Luke 5:30.

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 - The “Parable of the Tenants”
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The “Parable of the Tenants”

Matthew 21:33ff.

There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a wine press in it and built a tower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.

Mark 12:1-2

A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a tower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard.

Luke 20:9ff.

A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers, and then went away for a long time. At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard.

The “Parable of the Tenants” #2

Matthew

The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way.

Mark

But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed.

Luke

But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. He sent another servant, but that one they also beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty-handed. He sent still a third, and they wounded him and threw him out.



The “Parable of the Tenants” #3

Matthew

Last of all, he sent his son to them. ‘They will respect my son’, he said. But when the tenants saw the son, they said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him and take his inheritance.’ So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?

Mark

He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying ‘They will respect my son.’ But the tenants said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. What then will the owner of the vineyard do?

Luke

Then the owner of the vineyard said, ‘What shall I do? I will send my son, whom I love; perhaps they will respect him.’ But when the tenants saw him, they talked the matter over. ‘This is the heir,’ they said. ‘Let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them?

The “Parable of the Tenants” #4

Matthew

They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.” Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures, ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this is the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes’?”

Mark

He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others. Have you not read this Scripture: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes.’?

Luke

He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others.”
When they heard this, they said “Heaven forbid!” But he looked at them and said, “What then does this text mean: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone’? Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.”

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 - Jesus was a critic of the religious establishment of his day, who expected to be killed for his views.
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 - Mark’s version: the “criterion of embarrassment”



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 - Plus: Aramaic background!



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In Aramaic

“The son” = “the stone”
ben = eben

Luke

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When they heard this, they said “Heaven forbid!” But he looked at them and said, “What then does this text mean: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone’? Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.”

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 - Mark 10:45; criterion of Judean context

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 - The “Lord’s Supper” narrative: multiple attestation

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- Case Study #7:
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but that a later stage would see his work carried to the wider world.

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- Case Study #7:
 - Jesus believed his own mission was to the People of Israel only, *but* that a later stage would see his work carried to the wider world.
 - Matthew 10:6, 15:24; “the lost sheep of the house of Israel”; 10:23, “do not go”
 - The Healing of the Centurion’s Servant, Matthew 8:5-13, Luke 13:28-30.
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Christians and History

Matthew

Luke

When Jesus heard him, he marvelled, and said to those who followed him, Truly I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.

And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go, be it done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed at that very moment.

There you will weep and gnash your teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves thrust out. And men will come from east and west, and from north and south, and sit at table in the kingdom of God. And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.

Christians and History

- Case Study #7:
 - Jesus believed his own mission was to the People of Israel only,
but that a later stage would see his work carried to the wider world.
 - The Healing of the Centurion's Servant, Matthew 8:5-13, Luke 13:28-30: criterion of embarrassment.
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Christians and History

The Historical Jesus:

- The dawning intervention of God in history
 - God's ultimate messenger
 - Believed to be a miracle worker
 - Taught God's offer of forgiveness
 - Critic of the religious establishment
 - Death as a sacrifice
 - To Israel only, but there would be a later stage.
-
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Christians and History

The Historical Jesus:

- These conclusions require no Christian belief



Christians and History

The Historical Jesus:

- These conclusions require no Christian belief
- These conclusions *do not* necessitate Christian belief



Christians and History

The Historical Jesus:

- These conclusions require no Christian belief
 - These conclusions *do not* necessitate Christian belief
 - These conclusions are *consistent* with Christian belief.
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Christians and History

See your printed handout for further reading.

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