

Chapter Five

The Discourse Material of His Preaching

The discourse material furnishes the basis for the study of the preaching of Jesus. Yet certain problems are peculiar to this material as such. The material consists of fragmentary sayings and discourses.

I. The Problems of Harmony

1. Fragmentary reports.—A perfectly satisfactory Harmony of the Gospels yet remains a desideratum. Scholars differ widely upon many questions, while general agreement is had on many points. A chief problem of harmony is found in the nature of the records of the words and deeds of Jesus. The discourse material is in the form of reports that were written years after the original delivery. It was not the intention of the writers to give more than fair and sufficient reports. The opinion at the close of the Fourth Gospel indicates the attitude toward this material: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written." Jesus did not write a book of his ministry. He did not even outline what such a book should contain. The Gospel writers reported his preaching for evangelistic and credential purposes. They did not plan to write biographies. They were content to give a faithful reflection of his ministry.

The discourse material is also fragmentary. The Gospels present a mosaic of the Preacher. These fragments of sermons must be handled by one with the historical imagination which enables one to recast the thought, life, and civilization of the dim past. The rare homiletical genius of Jesus is discovered through these fragments. The more detailed accounts of the "Sermon on the Mount" and the "Farewell Discourse and Prayer" show what might have been expected from longer records, which would have enlarged our sources of knowledge but not the accuracy of our information.

The mass of the material corrects the danger of inductions from fragmentary reports. The student of the preaching of Jesus has an enlarging confidence in the reliability of his records, which profess to give a true account of Jesus' preaching. Various purposes may classify this discourse material. We group it into the fragmentary sayings and the discourses. Here again there is room for preferences. We list 54 discourses and 52 important fragmentary sayings. Incidental and minor words would be too numerous to catalog. Parallels are combined.

2. Trustworthiness.—The assumption of the trustworthiness of the records of the preaching of Jesus is basal to our study. Scholarly vandalism would lay waste this work of genius as remorselessly as the ancient Vandals destroyed the Italian works of art.

The history of biblical criticism discovers three types of attitude toward the Bible. The ultraconservative refrains from explanations of the growth of the form and materials of the Book. The extreme radical attempts to bring everything within the scope of his own theory of development; he often resorts to minute divisions of the books and these are assigned to various writers; he asserts that the authors of the Book were subject to the same chances of errors of judgment and statement that are found in profane authors, there not being any overruling mind. The mediating critic seeks to appropriate the good of modern research and still to maintain the traditional faith in the integrity of the Book.

The conflict of opinions has been sharp and often bitter. One cannot afford to be blind to the modern methods and suggested results of biblical scholarship, but one need not feel compelled to encamp with the radicals in order to be in the company of good scholars. Many difficult literary questions are justly connected with the records of Jesus' preaching; one does not care to overlook these. The origin, the nature, the history, and the relations of the documents all invite the attention of the student. Our present plan, however, is not to treat these, since these have called forth an ample literature. We accept the Gospels as a trustworthy record of the ministry of Jesus. They present the data for a synthetic view of Jesus the Preacher.

3. The time element.—Many problems of chronology appear in a study of the ministry of Jesus. With these we are not specially concerned. General agreement among the harmonists of the Gospels occurs, so that one may adopt a tentative order and grouping of events in the ministry of Jesus. The length of his ministry is variously held to be from one to four years. We accept the theory of the approximate three years' duration, and group the discourses thus:

HARMONY OF GOSPELS

(Scroll Down)

Period I.—The Opening Ministry in Various Sections, from the Passover in April 27 A.D. to December 27 A.D., with discourses 1-3, and fragmentary sayings 1-7.

#	<i>Discourse Subject</i>	<i>Audience</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Matt.</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
1	Regeneration	Nicodemus	Jerusalem				3:1-21
2	Worship and Salvation	Samaritan Woman	Near Sychar				4:5-26
3	Sowing and Harvest	Disciples	Near Sychar				4:27-38
#	<i>Fragmentary Sayings</i>	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John		
1		3:15					
2		4:4, 7, 10		4:4, 8, 12			
3						1:38, 39, 42	
4						1:47, 48, 50, 51	
5						2:4, 7, 8	
6						2:16, 19	
7			1:15				

Period II.—The First Period of the Galilean Ministry, from December 27 A.D. to Early Summer 28 A.D., with discourses 4-7, and fragmentary sayings 8-14.

#	<i>Discourse Subject</i>	<i>Audience</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Matt.</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
4	Rejection	Public	Nazareth			4:16-30	
5	Fasting	Disciples/others	Capernaum	9:14-17	2:18-22	5:33-39	
6	Relation to his Father	Public	Jerusalem				5:19-47
7	Sabbath Observance	Disciples/others	To Galilee	12:1-8	2:23-28	6:1-5	
#	<i>Fragmentary Sayings</i>	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John		
8					4:48, 50		
9		4:19	1:17	5:4, 10			
10			1:25	4:35			
11			1:38	4:43			
12		9:2, 4-6	2:5, 8-11	5:20, 22-24			
13		9:12, 13	2:14, 17	5:31, 32			
14		12:11-13	3:3-5	6:8-10			

Period III.—Second Period of the Galilean Ministry, from the Early Summer 28 A.D. to the Passover in April 29 A.D., with discourses 8-17, and fragmentary sayings 15-24.

#	<i>Discourse Subject</i>	<i>Audience</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Matt.</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
8	Sermon on the Mount	Public	Near Capernaum	5-7		6:17-49	
9	John & Suggested Topics	Public	Galilee	11:4-30		7:22-35	
10	Forgiveness	non-Disciples	Galilee			7:40-50	
11	Blasphemy	Public	Capernaum	12:25-37	3:23-30		
12	Signs	Public	Capernaum	12:38-45			
13	First Great Parable Group	Public	Shore Galilee	13:1-33	4:1-32	8:4-18	
14	Parables Explained & Given	Disciples	Capernaum	13:36-52			
15	Mission & Instruction of 12	Disciples	Galilee	10:5-42	6:7-11	9:3-5	
16	Bread of Life	Public	Capernaum				6:26-65
17	Traditions	Public	Capernaum (?)	15:3-20	7:6-23		
#	<i>Fragmentary Sayings</i>	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John		
15		8:7, 10-13		7:9			
16				7:13, 14			
17		12:48-50	3:33-35	8:21			
18		8:26	4:35, 39, 40	8:22, 25			
19		8:32	5:8, 9	8:30, 39			
20		9:22, 24	5:29, 34, 36, 39,41	8:45, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54			
21		9:28, 29, 30					
22		13:57					
23		14:16, 18	6:31, 37, 38	9:13, 14		6:5, 10, 12	
24		14:27, 31	6:50			6:20	

Period IV.—The Third Period of the Galilean Ministry, from the Passover 29 A.D. to Autumn 29 A.D., with discourses 18-22, and fragmentary sayings 25-30.

#	<i>Discourse Subject</i>	<i>Audience</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Matt.</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
18	Church Rock	Disciples	Caesarea Philippi	16:13-20	8:27-30	9:18-21	
19	His Death & Resurrection	Disciples	Caesarea Philippi	16:21-28	8:31-9:1	9:22-27	
20	Humility & Forgiveness	Disciples	Capernaum	18:1-35	9:33-50	9:48-50	
21	Discussion at Feast	Public	Jerusalem				7:14-36
22	Light & Freedom	Public	Jerusalem				8:12-58

#	<i>Fragmentary Sayings</i>	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
25		15:24, 26, 28	7:27, 29		
26			7:34		
27		15:32, 34	8:2,3,5		
28			8:26		
29		17:17, 20	9:16,19,21,23,25,29	9:41	
30		17:25-27			

Period V.—The Closing Ministry, from Autumn 29 A.D. to the Passover in April 30 A.D., with discourses 23-43, and fragmentary sayings 31-39.

#	<i>Discourse Subject</i>	<i>Audience</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Matt.</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
23	Good Shepherd	Public	Jerusalem				10:1-18
24	Mission of Seventy	Disciples	Probably Judea			10:1-24	
25	Eternal Life	Disciples/others	Probably Judea			10:25-37	
26	Prayer	Disciples	Probably Judea			11:1-13	
27	League with Evil	Public	Probably Judea			11:14-36	
28	Woes for Pharisees	non-Disciples	Probably Judea			11:37-54	
29	Against Pharisaism	Public	Probably Judea			12	
30	Repentance	Public	Probably Judea			13:1-9	
31	Sabbath Observance	Public	Probably Judea			13:10-21	
32	Messiahship	Public	Jerusalem				10:22-38
33	Salvation of Elect	Public	Perea			13:22-30	
34	Modesty in Feasts	non-Disciples	Perea			14:1-24	
35	Cost of Discipleship	Public	Perea			14:25-35	
36	Parables of Grace	Public	Perea			15	
37	Parables of Warning	Public	Perea			16	
38	Forgiveness & Faith	Public	Perea			17:1-10	
39	Coming Kingdom	Public	Samaria or Galilee			17:20-18:8	
40	Prayer of Pharisee & Publican	Public	Samaria or Galilee			18:9-14	
41	Divorce	Disciples/others	Perea	19:3-12	10:2-12		
42	Rewards of Discipleship	Disciples/others	Perea	19:16-20:16	10:17-31	18:18-30	
43	Parable of the Pounds	Disciples/others	Jericho			19:11-27	

#	<i>Fragmentary Sayings</i>	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
31				10:41, 42	
32					9:3-6, 35, 37, 39, 41
33					11:4, 7, 9-11, 14, 15
34					11:23, 25, 26, 34, 39, 41-44
35		19:14	10:14, 15	18:16, 17	
36		20:18, 19	10:33, 34	18:31-33	
37		20:21-23, 25-28	10:36, 38-40, 42-45		
38		20:32	10:49, 51, 52	18:41, 42	
39				19:5, 9, 10	

Period VI.—The Last Week, during the Passover 30 A.D. with discourses 44-54, and fragmentary sayings 40-52.

#	<i>Discourse Subject</i>	<i>Audience</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Matt.</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
44	His Death & Glory	Public	Jerusalem				12:30-36
45	Belief & Unbelief	Public	Jerusalem				12:44-50
46	Authority Challenged	Public	Jerusalem	21:23-22:14	11:27-12:12	20:1-19	
47	Three Jewish Questions	Public	Jerusalem	22:15-33	12:13-27	20:20-40	
48	The Unanswerable Question	Public	Jerusalem	22:34-46	12:28-34	20:41-44	
49	Denunciation of Pharisees	Public	Jerusalem	23:1-39	12:38-40	20:45-47	
50	End of Jerusalem & World	Disciples	Mt. Olivet	24:1-25:46	13:1-37	21:5-36	
51	Precedence in Kingdom	Disciples	Jerusalem			22:24-30	

# (Cont.)	Discourse Subject	Audience	Place	Matt.	Mark	Luke	John
52	Humility	Disciples	Jerusalem				13:4-20
53	Memorial Supper	Disciples	Jerusalem	26:26-29	14:22-25	22:19-20	
54	Farewell Discourse & Prayer	Disciples	Jerusalem				14-17
#	<i>Fragmentary Sayings</i>	Matthew	Mark		Luke		John
40		21:2, 3	11:2, 3		19:30, 31, 40, 42-44		
41		21:19	11:14				
42		21:13, 16	11:17		19:46		
43		21:21, 22	11:22-25				
44			12:43, 44		21:3,4		
45		24:2			21:6, 8, 9		
46		26:2					
47		26:10-13	14:6-9				12:7, 8
48		26:36,38-42, 45,46	14:32,34,36-38,41,42	22:40, 42, 46			
49		26:50, 52-55	14:48, 49	22:48, 51-53			11:5, 7, 8
50							18:20, 21, 23
51					23:3		18:34, 36, 37
52		27:46	15:34		23:28-31, 34, 43, 46		19:26, 27, 28, 30

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4. Questions of geography.—It is impossible from present data to locate accurately all the events of Jesus' ministry. The greatest variations of opinion are regarding the discourses 28-40. We have indicated above our preferences in the doubtful cases and the others about which there is general agreement. Space forbids discussion of the questions.

5. Historical situations.—From the records it seems that certain discourses have more than one historical setting. This is a problem for the harmonist. We give here the results of the specialists who are competent to speak. It would have been quite natural for a traveling preacher to repeat himself either in part or in entire discourses. While repetitions occur, one must distinguish these from similarities of statement.

II. The Synoptic Discourses

1. Material distributed.—Forty-one discourses of Jesus are recorded by the Synoptics (Gospels according to Matthew, Mark and Luke). Out of the 21 recorded by Matthew, only 2 are peculiar to him; none are peculiar to Mark; out of the 36 recorded by Luke, 20 are peculiar to him; Matthew and Mark have 3 discourses in common, Matthew and Luke, 2; Matthew, Mark and Luke: 14. The Gospel of Luke deserves the title of the Gospel of the Discourses. It has more peculiar to it than any other, and has but two less than Matthew and Mark together.

These Synoptic discourses are assigned to all periods of Jesus' ministry except the first. The combination of the three records is most largely represented by six discourses in the last period. The large series of discourses given by Luke in period five deserves special notice, the series being broken only three times. It will appear that the Synoptics furnish data for all periods of Jesus' ministry. They contain 22 out of the 30 public discourses.

2. Single and complex accounts.—Twenty-two of the forty-one Synoptic discourses are single accounts, being recorded by only one writer; Matthew gives two and Luke the others. These single records do not offer special difficulties as records. There are only a few double-account records, three by Matthew-Mark and two by Matthew-Luke. This leaves 14 discourses for the triple records. The task, then, of securing a composite view of the Preacher will not appear so hopeless. The differences, due to varieties of style and purpose, invite attempts at solution but do not materially hinder a study of the homiletical method of Jesus. Plurality of accounts really establishes confidence in the work of the student. Such problems as are germane to our thesis will find timely and suitable discussion.

III. The Johannine Discourses

The 13 discourses in the Gospel of John are not found elsewhere and are assigned to all periods of Jesus' ministry. Whether this Gospel presents a different Preacher from him of the Synoptics will appear later.

IV. The Fragmentary Sayings

The fragmentary sayings of Jesus present a subordinate but valuable discourse material. They are formed by the words of Jesus that could not be classed as

discourses, either from their brevity or narrative nature. Some of them doubtless were originally parts of extended discourses. They help toward a correct estimate of his preaching. The most important ones have been listed above.

(End of Chapter Five – The Discourse Material of His Preaching)