

Jesus's Stenographers

The Story of the Red Letters

**Small Groups and Personal
Reader Guide**

Ben van Noort

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1. Dare to Read your Bible

“³If any one teaches otherwise and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching which accords with godliness, ⁴he is puffed up with conceit, he knows nothing;”

1 Timothy 6:3-4 (RSV) ¹

Learning objective: Discover the Bible texts that state how speedy writers followed Jesus promptly.

Spectators of Jesus, the First Generation

(Chap. 1.1, 1.2)

“¹Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been **accomplished among us**, ²just as they were delivered **to us** by those who from the beginning were **eyewitnesses and ministers of the word**, ³it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, **to write** an orderly account for you, most excellent Theoph'ilus, ⁴that you may know **the truth** concerning the things of which you have been informed.”

Luke 1:1-4

1. What is meant with “things which have been accomplished among us”? Remind that this is the beginning of a Gospel book.
2. In Luke 1:2 we read about “eyewitnesses and ministers of the word”. Usually one takes this expression for the “eyewitnesses who became preachers of the word”. That is the apostles of Jesus who preached the Gospel after Jesus's departure.
3. Discuss that in this concept is approved an oral tradition of Jesus's deeds and words. Include in your discussion what handicaps are involved in the concept of an oral tradition.
4. It is also possible to focus on the reference word “us” in Luke 1:1-2.

¹ RSV version of the Bible has been followed in this Manual (Keywords in bold). It is also possible to follow this manual with different versions.

Read this passage and show that there is a more basic translation possible on the term “ministers of the word”.

5. How many times does “us” appear in this passage?
Discuss what group is referred to with “us”. And what the benefits are of this approach?
6. Discuss the new meaning of “servants of the word” in this view of Luke’s opening of his Gospel.
7. In general we can say that Luke wrote his Gospel after Jesus’s departure as his death and resurrection are included in the book.
Who were Luke’s examples he followed in writing his Gospel? And what does that say about the shape of their accounts they provided?
8. “that you may know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed.” Why is Luke’s final remark in accordance with the new approach (and *not at all* with the theory of the oral tradition)?

The Law and the Gospel

(Chap. 1.4)

Read Hebrews 2:3-4. What word has been added in all translations? Discuss why this gives a completely different meaning of this passage.

1. What comparison has been made in Hebrews 2:3–4 between the Law of the Ten Commandments and the Sayings of Jesus?
2. Does this comparison should encourage or discourage us? Why?
3. What has this passage to do with speedy writing?

The Apostolic Manifesto

(Chap. 1.5, 1.6)

In 1 John 1:1-4 the activities of the Apostles have been exposed.

1. They fall apart in two types of preaching. What types?
2. What is the relation between v. 3 and 4?

3. Discuss the strength of 1 John 1:4 concerning the delivering of Jesus's words, in the past and today.

Think about

How does the information of speedy writers in Jesus's ministry affect you? Discuss together the most important points.

Also serious questions may arise. Name them and probably they will find a proper place later on in this course. Do you have examples to support your contribution?

Personal notes:

2. The Language of Jesus

“Therefore gird up your minds, be sober, set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

1 Peter 1:13

Learning objective: Discover what the Bible tells about the language Jesus spoke in contrast to the claims of modern scholars.

The languages in Israel

(Chap 2.1)

1. What languages were in use in the Jewish land in Jesus's time?
2. In what languages was the accusation against Jesus on the cross? (John 19:20)
3. In what language is the New Testament delivered to us?
4. Aramaic is also claimed to be in use at that time, by modern scholars? Why? Discuss the arguments for the opinion that Jesus would have spoken Aramaic in his teaching (the Aramaic theory).

What about the Semitic Sayings of Jesus

(Chap 2.2)

Three Semitic sayings of Jesus, maybe four. They are:

- Talitha cum(i)! – Little girl arise!
- Effatha! – Be opened!
- Eli, Eli, lema sabachtani? – My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Matthew)

Notice!

In Mark it is: Eloï, Eloï, lama sabachtani?

There were two sayings: Matthew *shortly before* the ninth hour (three o'clock afternoon); Mark *at* the ninth hour.

Eli and *Eloï* refer to Hebrew parlance. Aramaic would be *Elahi* (my God).

1. What are Aramaic loanwords in the Semitic sayings above?
2. Are they decisive for the Aramaic theory?

More Biblical Evidence that Jesus Spoke Greek

(Chap 2.3)

Aramaic was the language of Syria and of Mesopotamia, the northern and eastern region around the river Euphrates. In Greek the word *Suristi* is: in Aramaic, and *Hebraïsti* is: in Hebrew.

1. Was Aramaic indeed a normal vehicle of speech in Judea and Galilee?
2. Which languages were represented in the first Christian community in Jerusalem? (Acts 6:1)
3. Galileans were not supposed to speak Aramaic or Hebrew. How is this clear from the Pentecost event? Acts 2:11
4. Does there exist a piece of papyrus or parchment with an Aramaic gospel text that not has been translated from the Greek gospels?
5. What must be the general conclusion concerning the Aramaic theory?

Think about

“Unquestionably there was a period of oral tradition before the recording of the Gospels, in which time the transition occurred from the Aramaic into the Greek language.”

This statement of the German scholar W.G. Kümmel can be seen as representative for the general theological approach since the beginning of the 20th century until today.

What about the one-liner “The language of Jesus does not matter, but the meaning of his words do.”?

Personal notes:

3. Stenography in the Roman Empire

²⁴“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock;”

Matthew 7:24

Learning objective: Discover the origin of stenography in classical time and why it is a pretty hidden subject.

Conservation of the Spoken Word in the Greek Culture

(Chap 3.1, 3.2)

Thucydides (ca. 400 BC) wrote a History about the war between two Greek cities: Athens and Sparta. He became the father of Greek historian writing.

1. How did Thucydides work with the spoken word in the History of the Peloponnesian War?
2. What was the problem of the spoken word in Greek historic literature.
3. How did Greek writing Jewish authors as Flavius Josephus and Philo deal with it?
4. Why was the conservation of the spoken word important in Administration and Jurisdiction? And how did they?

Origin of Classical Stenography

(Chap. 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 3.4.1)

Stenography is the art of writing by one sign per syllable. That made it possible to follow the spoken word by writing. The inventor was Tiro, a slave of Cicero, and it were also slaves who brought new developments in the art.

1. The introduction of stenography the Roman culture. When, where and how.
2. Who has written about this affair and why so late?
3. What about the testimony of the Spanish bishop Isidor of Sevilla concerning stenography (ca. 600 AD)? Which slaves brought new additions in the art?
4. What is the reason that there are only a few testimonies of stenography in the first century AD?
5. The importance of Seneca's testimony about stenography (ca 50 AD). Why? And what about the sayings of the poet Martiales?
6. What is the answer to the question that there is little mentioning about stenography in the available literature, of the first time of it (the dark period)?
7. (Chap. 3.4.2, 3.4.3, 3.4.4)
Cicero was importance for the Latin stenography. Cicero is also important for our knowledge of the origin of Greek stenography. Why?
8. The testimony of Plutarch shows that Latin and Greek stenography began and developed in Rome side by side. How?
9. (Optional) What about oksugraphy?
10. What the role of Caesar August in the development of stenography for the Roman Empire? Why?

Stenography and the Gospels

(Chap. 3.8)

Think About

How is it possible that bishop Augustine is so well-known, while the orthodox and learned bishop Isidor of Sevilla of Spain has been forgotten? His remark about stenography was certainly intended by him as relevant knowledge for the Church he served.

Personal Notes

4. From Writing Tablets to the Gospels

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”

Luke 21:33

Learning objective: The function of stenography in Jesus’s ministry.

The Task of Jesus’s Speedy Writers

(Chap. 4.1, 4.2)

1. Luke did not speak about stenographers in the introduction of his Gospel. Why not?
2. Was the rule of Thucydides about history writing appropriate for the gospel writers? Why?
3. What was the main task for the writers that jotted down Jesus’s words? Why?
4. What methods in writing (3) has been followed by Jesus’s writers who followed him?

Who were Jesus’s Stenographers?

(Chap 4.3, 4.4)

1. Who among the Twelve were stenographers (4) of Jesus? And how can that be inferred?
2. Which men (2) outside the peer group of the Twelve can be reckoned among them? Why?

3. There were certainly also stenographers in the wider circle of followers of Jesus. Give three examples and how they worked?

Revelation and Writing

(Chap. 4.4)

1. Zechariah, Mary, Joseph, Peter, Paul. Sum up the different possibilities of recording the spoken word of the revelations they received.

Alternative but Current Gospel Theories

(Chap 4.5.1, 4.5.2)

2. What says the Two-Source-Theory about the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke (synoptics)?
3. What are the problems connected with this theory?
4. What are the usual dates of these gospels?
5. What about the Memorization Theory?
6. How likely is this theory? Why?

Discuss Next Questions

Is it acceptable that a pastor in the Church read a Gospel Story with an alternative theory in mind? Is he then lying about this Story?

Is it possible that one can rely on any Gospel story with an alternative gospel theory in mind?

Personal Notes

5. Four in a Row

“³¹If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

John 8:31–32

Learning objective: Discover specific differences between the four gospels due to the reporting activities of Jesus’s speedy writers.

1. What is the current explanation why there are four gospel books?
2. What are the gospels that look very much the same in style and wording? They are called the synoptic gospels: to be looked at together.
3. There are also differences between them. Give examples.
4. What is a specific feature of the Gospel of John?

The Gospel of Matthew

(Chap. 5.2)

R.T. France about it: “Matthew has been called ‘the Teacher’s Gospel’ because its material is so presented that it is very suitable for use in teaching.”

The Gospel of Matthew contains especially teaching records.

1. What are the teaching features of Matthew (3). Discuss them. Why is teaching important in life and especially concerning faith?
2. Why is the term “Kingdom of Heaven” a reference to teaching records?
3. Read the opening of the “Sermon on the Mount” with the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1–11). The first eight of them stand for eight types of Christians. Observe and discuss the contrast in each Beatitude.
4. They are focusing on personal qualities with spiritual dimensions. Qualities of the heart. What’s yours? What does it mean to you? If you don’t know, what would you like and why?

5. What's the mandate at the end of this gospel (Matthew 28:19-20)? What part has to do with our subject?

The Gospel of Luke

(Chap. 5.3)

1. Always and everywhere people have been curious to know what happens around. That was also in Jesus's time. Publicity was the result.
2. Luke copied public records in writing his gospel? In what part of his gospel Luke refers to that (Chap. 1)?
3. Define the two circles of Jesus's followers that were interested in the teaching records or/and in the public records? Name some individuals who belonged to each.
4. How is Jesus's character described in the Gospel of Luke? Examples?
5. Read the story "Healing of the Centurion's Slave" in Luke 7:2-10. Discuss the aspects of this report that are interesting for the public to know.

The Gospel of Mark

(Chap. 5.4)

1. What is meant with the Marcan primary style? What are the consisting peculiarities?
2. Give examples of the Marcan style in his report of the Resurrection of Jairus' daughter.
3. Also in his report about John the Baptist the Marcan style differs from Matthew and Luke. Discuss the differences in reporting about John's clothing and food.
4. How did the great scholar B.H. Streeter already explain the Marcan style?

The Gospel of John

(Chap. 5.5)

1. The synoptic gospels contain the work of Jesus in Galilee. How is that with the Gospel of John? In what part of Israel did he also work?

2. What was the rather morbid rule the Pharisees had decreed concerning those people who saw Jesus as the Messiah of Israel?
3. What was the difference between the work of the note-takers of Jesus in Galilee or in Judea?
4. What was the result later for style and character of the Gospel of John?

Distribution of the spoken word

(Chap. 5.5)

1. What is meant with the distribution of the spoken word? Where did it start and what became the results.
2. What great problem in the gospels is unsolvable if distribution of the spoken word remains out of the picture (as in current theology)?
3. Describe the materials the speedy writers made use of.
4. What was the role of secretaries who sometimes have served the note-takers in their reporting task?
5. Sum up the sources that have been developed during Jesus's ministry, and that have been explored by the gospel writers later.

Think About

The apostle Paul stated that, "All Scripture is inspired by God" (2 Timothy 3:16). How could he say so? What would be more likely? That the inspiration of the gospels occurred via the oral tradition wherein even the words of Jesus would have been changed in many ways, or via Jesus's speedy writers who followed him promptly and who were convinced that he was the Messiah of Israel?

Personal Notes

6. Redating the Gospels

“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”

Luke 6:46 NIV

Learning objective: Discover the coherence between the sources of the gospels and their date of publication.

Late Dates, Early Dates and Very Early Dates

(Chap. 6.1)

1. What are the current (late) dates for the gospels?
2. What are the current presuppositions for these dates?
3. There are also early dates. When? So there are no fixed dates.
4. What is the correlation between the late dates and the oral tradition?
5. Discuss the “very early dates” and the reasons for them.

The Matthew-John Project

(Chap. 6.2.1, 6.2.3, 6.2.4)

1. Explain that the Gospel of Matthew and John form where from the outset part of one project. What was Matthew’s main subject and what was John’s?
2. What is the evidence that the Gospel of Matthew presented carefully the teaching reports that were inherited from Jesus’s ministry, without embellishments.
3. John wrote for two different groups. Which groups? Why?
4. What differences existed between the Galileans and the Judeans?
5. The translation “Jews” in John’s Gospel is rather inappropriate? Better would be? Discuss why is this crucial for a proper understanding of the Gospel of John?

6. What were the specific goals of the gospel of Matthew and John?

The Secretary Gospels

(Chap. 6.3.1, 6.3.2, 6.3.3)

1. Who worked most probably as note-takers in the period the Twelve were on missionary journey?
2. That would be the necessary condition for them to become gospel writers later. Why?
3. Read 2 Thessalonians 3:17-18. Imagine that Paul always made use of secretaries. Does that make his letters less valuable?
4. What is the argument that the Gospel of Luke is written at the same time as the gospels of Matthew and John, in 30 AD?
5. Read and discuss Hebrews 9:16–17. “¹⁶ For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. ¹⁷ For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive.”
The context is about the work of Jesus who left an inheritance after his death and the last will has to be brought in effect. Therefore the date of the Gospel of Mark is the same as the other gospels.
6. Why can it called the Common Gospel? What are its characteristics?
7. How are the other gospels to be named? What are their characteristics?

The Longer Mark Ending

(Chap. 6.4.1.)

1. What objections (2) exist against the passage of Mark 16:9–20? How relevant are they?
2. Who knew already this long ending?
3. Many scholars want to end the Gospel of Mark with verse 16:8. Is that a strong argument? Why?

Failing Gospel Theories

(Chap. 6.4.3, 6.4.4)

Choose some of the presented theological theories of this sections. Remark and formulate that they have all a reasonable impetus. Discuss the threatening implications for the Gospel. (If the reliability of the sayings of Jesus are under pressure in any way, we have a serious problem.)

Think About

Why each gospel is still important for the Christians, when you look at the different groups for which they were written?

Personal Notes

8. Reading the Gospels Analytically

“¹⁶ All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

2 Timothy 3:16

Learning objective: Discover the method of analytical reading (a.r.) of the gospels and the rules that are conditional.

Rules for Discourses

(Chap. 7.1)

1. What is meant with a single (or simple) introduction? And what signal has it to the reader?
2. What is a double (or twofold) introduction/ and what is now the signal to the reader?
3. What is a plural introduction and what does it announce?

4. Discuss the story of the Confession of Peter is a striking example of the three features who stand for a rule each (Matthew 16:15–20, Mark 8:29–30. Luke 9:20–21).
5. The questions of Jesus are the same in each gospel? Is that in accordance with the introductions?
6. How do you explain the three different answers of Peter?
7. What was the full answer of Peter?

Rules for Narratives

(Chap. 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.7)

1. What is meant with the Rule of Succession? What Signal Words are used, or are missing,
2. What is the Rule of Interruption? What signal words are used?
3. What is the typical Marcan style of reporting?
4. How often occurs this Marcan style in Mark 11:1-20?
5. Read “The Centurion of Capernaum” Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 7:2-10. What are the differences between these reports?
6. How do you harmonize them using the five rules analytical reading. Take note of the Signal Words at the beginning of the sentences.
7. Do the same with “The Best Places”, Matthew 20:20–22 and Mark 10:35–38.

Conclusions

1. The five rules for analytical reading determine the course of the spoken word, and the course of events. Why?
2. Details in the narrative parts are never changed elements due to an oral tradition. They are always results of careful observations by the note-takers. Why?
3. Analytical reading is an arbiter to distinguish between identical and non-identical passages in the gospels. Why?

Personal Notes

8 Documentation Exegesis

“As for what was sown on good soil, this is he who hears the word and understands it; he indeed bears fruit, and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

Matthew 13:23

Learning objective: Discover how you can read the gospels more fruitful, using the documentation theory and analytical reading.

Points of Attention

(Chap. 8.1)

1. Many suppose that one event caused comparable narratives by the oral tradition. Moreover the oral tradition would cause differences between the narratives and different places of them in the gospels.
2. Luke says in his prologue two times that he wrote *in succession* what had happened. He worked as the many who copied reports “event after event”. He says that he wrote *kathexès*, consecutively, successively.
3. With the rules for analytical reading it is always possible to examine accurately the direct speeches and the course of an event. This settles equality or inequality in most cases.
4. It is possible to make a list of anchor points. That are narratives that no doubt refer to the same events in the synoptic gospels. They form the backbone in each gospel. Comparable events before or after an anchor point are different events. (See the overview of Chap. 8.4.)

Jesus in Jericho

(Chap. 8.2, 8.3, 8.4)

Each of the synoptic gospels has a story of a blind man (or men, Matthew) who was healed in Jericho.

1. There are striking similarities in these stories (up to 15). Give examples.
2. Theologians conclude therefore that there are three reports of one healing event.
3. Give some slight dissimilarities between these stories. There are two attitudes for exegetes to deal with them. How and are they satisfying? Why?
4. Very often there a so-called living pattern becomes visible when the dissimilarities are taken seriously. What in the case of the stories of the blind men of Jericho?
5. Discuss the causes of repeated (similar) events in Jesus ministry (5).

Conclusion:

In the documentation theory, details of comparable events are often interrelated and part of a living pattern: the living context. It is the task of the exegete to give a proper explanation for these details, *to expose that living context*.

Documentation Dynamics

(Chap 8.5, 8.6, 8.7)

The theories of oral tradition and documentation differ about the value of the gospels. The oral tradition reduces the lively impact of the events, documentation reveals the vividness of the events (living patterns).

1. Discuss there are six dynamics of the documentation exegesis. What are they specifically? Why is that in contrast to the oral tradition?
2. It is quite dynamic to read the genealogies of Jesus in Matthew (1:1–17) and Luke (3:23–38). Why a genealogy of Joseph (Matthew) as he was not the biological father of Jesus? And what about the inconsistencies in it? Wasn't it a risk for Matthew to use it as a start for his gospel?
3. It is an old question whether the genealogy of Luke is also of Joseph, but from a different point of view than in Matthew. Others have stated that Luke's genealogy is in fact Mary's genealogy. This last view is the best in documentation perspective, as the gospels are all written side by side, early in Jerusalem in the first Christian Community. There was no need for two genealogies of Joseph.

Think About

Reductionism in orthodox and liberal theology has resulted in a reduced image of Jesus, due to the oral tradition. The dynamic of events (liberal: many events) has been disappeared, evaporated, only a scanty measure of it remained. However, gospel documentation shows that all the reports in the gospels are still witnessing accurately about the great Christ events. The meaning to us is not to imitate him, but only to praise and to follow him. That's enough.

Personal Notes

9. Living Patterns

“He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”

John 14:21

“Let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us.”

Hebrews 12:1

Learning objective: How to recognize “living patterns” in the Gospels.

Look-alike Stories and their Living Patterns

In the desert: Repetition

(9.1)

Matthew 4:1–11, Luke 4:1–13

1. What is the question with the narratives of Matthew and Luke about Jesus's temptations?
2. What is the living pattern to solve this question?

3. What differences do you see between the temptations of making bread and also between the offerings of great political power? This makes clear that we have to do with different occasions.

Three paralytics cured: Following an Example

(9.2)

Matthew 9:1–8, Mark 2:3–12, Luke 5:17–26

1. Sum up the similarities (6) in these stories
2. Sum up the differences to show that the stories refer to different events. Especially between the second and the third one.
3. What is the living pattern and where starts it?
4. What was the reason that Jesus was so straight against the Pharisees? Why was that particularly necessary?

Healing of Peter's Mother-in-Law: Going where the Healing is

(9.3)

Matthew 8:14–17, Mark 1:29–34, Luke 4:38–41

1. There are her two stories referring to one event. Which are they? Compare the Overview of Look-a-likes in 8.4. What do you see about the place of these stories?
2. What happened before the healing of Peter's mother in law, and what thereafter?
3. Is there a living pattern in these stories that explain the similarity between them? Why?
4. What is specific for Matthew in his report?

Healing of a Withered Hand: Collecting Incriminating Evidence

(9.4)

Matthew 12:1–14, Mark 2:23–3:6, Luke 6:1–11

1. There are her two events and two descriptions. What are the stories of the first event? Look also to the Overview of Look-a-likes.
2. The living pattern in the second event is: collecting incriminating evidence. What is that and why is that used here and by who?
3. In this last case would the healed man have understood that the Pharisees were not concerned with him, but only with their own business?

From Levi to Matthew: Repetition and Breaking a Tradition

(9.5)

Matthew 9:9–17, Mark 2:13–22, Luke 5:27–39

When you see the Overview Look-alikes (8.4), than one sees immediately that the story of Matthew is much later. There is nearly one difference in the circumstances. Levi has got a new name: Matthew. Moreover the narratives of Mark and Luke refer to an occasion early in Jesus's ministry. The stories go identically: it begins with an invitation of Jesus to Levi/Matthew to come with him, later in the evening there is a banquet in the house of Levi with many colleagues (tax collectors).

1. What is the meaning of the name Matthew? And what would this new name have meant to Matthew?
2. In what verses in Matthew and Mark becomes clear that the two events happened on a day of fasting. The contrast between the banquet and fasting in the neighborhood could not be greater.
3. Look also to the remarks of Jesus about wedding quests in each story (Mt 9:15–19, Mk 2:19–22, Lk 5:34–39). Take note that each case begins with a single introduction. Meaning: complete direct speeches follow. Remark the small differences between the speeches. Who are the addressees in Mt (9:14), in Mk (2:18), in Lk (5:30, 33)?
4. Discuss the logic of the documentation theory and the logic of the old explanation of the oral tradition.

Two Women Standing Alone: Following an Example

(9.7)

Matthew 15:21–28, Mark 7:24–30

1. When did this happen and where?
2. Why are two events at stake and not one? Were there two women or one? Why?
3. What difference is the approach of the first in contrast to the second woman?
4. What do you think about the harsh answers of Jesus to the women? What explanation is given (in the book)?
5. Here also: Discuss the logic of the documentation theory and the logic of the old explanation of the oral tradition concerning the direct speeches.
6. What living pattern do you propose?

The Rich Men and Their Question: Seeking the Answer

(9.8)

Matthew 19:16–22, Mark 10:17–22, Luke 18:18–23

1. A rich young ruler or an rich old ruler? Or wasn't he a ruler at all?
2. Why has this story always been a “cornerstone of the oral tradition”? And what are the problems if these stories go back to one event?
3. Why is documentation a better approach, doing more right to the features? With respect to the spoken word and to the narrative parts?
4. Discuss the living pattern.
5. Did Peter ask Peter three times for their reward? Or didn't he?

Think About

What wrote the orthodox Reformed theologian N.B. Stonehouse in the middle of the 20th century about the Story of the Rich Young Ruler? Would he, in the pulpit, have shared this Neo-Calvinistic view ever to the people? Why? How would that be today?

Personal Notes

10. The Gospels and the Canon

“For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive.”

Hebrews 9:17

“¹⁵And count the forbearance of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, ¹⁶speaking of this as he does in all his letters.”
2 Peter 3:15–16

Learning objectives: The Canon is Apostolic: That is: (1) given by the apostles, and (2) was complete at the end of the apostolic era in 70 AD, and (3) was ready to be spread all over the world. However (4), the ecclesiastical recognition of the canon took some centuries.

The Great Difference

(Chap. 10.1)

Generally, one considers the letters of Paul to be the first writings of the New Testament. And consequently all the other books were added, as one supposes, until the list of 27 books had been completed. However, according to the documentation theory not the letters of Paul, but the four gospels are the first writings of the Christians.

In Hebrews this is also mentioned. Jesus who gave a better covenant confirmed his last will with his death and thereafter it became effective. The will of the testator was to be performed. That means: Jesus's words existed when he passed away. It was only necessary to bring them out in books as soon as possible to make it possible for every believer to know his last will.

1. What are the two main questions in theology that are insoluble and keep the subject of the canon constantly into the dark?
2. Are these questions really relevant from the point of view of Gospel documentation? Why?

The Canon Formula

(Chap. 10.2)

1. Discuss the meaning of these formulas: $S \rightarrow C$, $C \rightarrow S$, $S \leftrightarrow C$, $S(\text{total}) \leftrightarrow C(\text{total})$.
2. What was the role of the apostles in this formula?
3. How is that described in the Apostolic Manifesto (1 John 1:1-4)?
4. And how long approximately was this apostolic period? Why was this important for the Canon Formula?

The Apostolic Canon

(Chap 10.3.1, 10.3.2)

1. How is it possible that the number of apostolic letters in the New Testament is so small?
2. How do we know that the apostle Paul delivered the gospels to the churches he founded? (1 Timothy 6:3, 4; 2 Peter 3:1–2 and 1 Peter 1:1–2)
3. To which region Peter wrote two letters? Why? And whose example did he follow?
4. When did the apostles Peter and Paul die according to the non-Biblical letter of Clement Romanus?
5. To what region was the Revelation of John sent? How do we know?
6. How do we know that this book was written before the year 70 AD?
7. The last letter of the New Testament is that of Jude. Who was this Jude?
8. How do we know that this book was written before the year 70 AD?
9. Discuss the thesis: The Apostolic Canon of the New Testament began shortly after Pentecost and was ready before the year 70.
10. Why is the documentation theory important for this opinion?

From Apostolic to Ecclesiastical Canon

(Chap. 10.4)

Athanasius was a bishop in Alexandria (Egypt) and is called the “Father of Orthodoxy”. Without the intention to do a special thing in history, he instructed his co-workers to hold the books of the church high and for the New Testament he gave the list of 27 books. That was the impetus for the ecclesiastical acceptance for the New Testament Canon.

1. When did Athanasius make this list known to the world? Year, occasion.
2. There had been many debates about the issue of the books in the Church earlier. Give examples.
3. What caused the difference in books being read in the churches around the Mediterranean Sea?
4. How did Athanasius come to the list of 27 New Testament books? Motivation.

5. Two other places where the canon of Athanasius was accepted later. Where and by who?
6. What was the rule Augustine followed to find the true books? What confirmation do you see with the subject of question 4?

Acts, James, the Pastoral Letters
(Chap. 10.5)

Some New Testament writings and their importance: the Acts of the Apostles, the Letter of James, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus.

1. Acts gives the descriptions of two Christian centers: 1. Jerusalem and Judea and 2. Turkey and Greece. Who were their leaders?
2. Who is the writer of Acts? Compare Acts 1:12 and Luke 1:1-3.
3. We may be convinced that he wrote Acts with the same accuracy. What principles?
4. The Letter of James is in history underestimated. Who began with this practice? Why?
5. Why is this Letter extremely important?
6. 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus. What criticism is given to these letters by modern scholars?
7. How are they named together? What do you think: Is that name appropriate? Why?
8. How were they estimated in the past?
9. Does these letters fit in the life of Paul?
10. First missionary journey: Acts 13:4-14:28
Second missionary journey: Acts 15:36-18:22
Thirst missionary journey: Acts 18:23-21:4
Fourth missionary journey: Acts 27:1-28:16

Hebrews and the Canon
(Chap. 10.6)

1. What was the opinion of Martin Luther about the author of the Letter to the Hebrews? Why?

2. Why didn't mention the author of the letter is name in it?
3. The indications that Paul was the author of the Letter to the Hebrews.
4. What is decisive for Paul's authorship? The relation between Galatians and Hebrews.

Byzantine and Alexandrian Text forms

(Chap. 10.7.1, 10.7.2, 10.7.3)

1. Small changes that entered into the text of the New Testament. Caused by ...?
2. What is the common text?
3. Give two examples of changed texts.
4. The rule of the oldest text form. Name? Is it always profitable to take the readings from the oldest text form? Why?
5. What is the rule of "convenience with the book"?
6. Read Matthew 5:17-19. Did Jesus mean that not one letter would fall from the Law until the end of the world? Or is there a different meaning?

Think about

Why is it not a great loss that small changes entered into the text being delivered into the hands of man?

Restoration of a costly painting. Would it be appropriate to restore with a color different from the colors used by the original painter? What is the resemblance with text restoration?

What does it mean to you that we possess the real words of Jesus? With regard to practices and understanding of your belief?

Personal Notes

