

The First Gospel

The Gospel of Mark

Is Christian Morality Unique? Part 1

The First Gospel - Mark

Michelle Nailon CSB

Slide Set No 5 of 10

In 70CE the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, the centre of Judaism It was time for the Followers of Jesus, to clarify and define, who they were

No. 129.

Time-line for Mark's Gospel

A re-cap on the timeline of the 1st century CE in Palestine.

The death of Jesus was approximately 33 CE.

The ministry of Paul was roughly in the 50's.

The first gospel, that of Mark, is estimated to be in 70 CE.

Gospel of Mark
70 CE

Ministry of Paul
50's CE

Death of Jesus
33CE

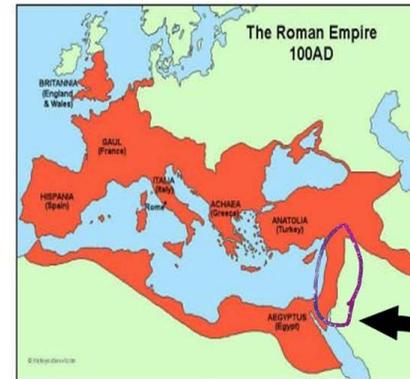
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No. 131

No. 130



▶ At the time when Mark's gospel was being written in 70 CE there was a lot going on in Palestine.

▶ Palestine

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No. 132

Jerusalem 70 CE



▶ The Jews had revolted against Rome and the army of the Roman General Vespasian, who was to become the Emperor Titus, encircled Jerusalem.



Jerusalem 70CE

The army starved out the population and killed those trying to escape.

Mark's gospel appears to contain a description of the chaos (Mark 13).

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In 70CE the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, the centre of Judaism

It was time for the Followers of Jesus, to clarify and define, who they were

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The Roman General Vespasian had intended to spare the Jerusalem Temple, one of the wonders of the ancient world.

However, in the mayhem that ensued in taking the city, the Temple was destroyed.

Only one wall survived.

To the present day this wall is venerated by Jews as the "Wailing Wall"



No. 135

By 70 CE, following the ministry of Paul in the 50's CE, the Church had spread rapidly amongst non-Jews (called Gentiles) and throughout the Roman Empire.



Where were the followers of Jesus at this time in 70 CE? Many of them had already left Jerusalem because of persecution.

Even so, they would have been well aware of what was going on.

No. 134

No. 136

During this time, the stories about Jesus were being told and re-told within small household groups



No. 137.

At the same time, even while the church spread, it retained its leadership

(cf. 1 Cor. 15).

For instance after the betrayal of Jesus by Judas and the subsequent suicide of Judas, someone was selected to take his place

(Acts 1).

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Also, the church held a council about 50 CE

(Acts 15).

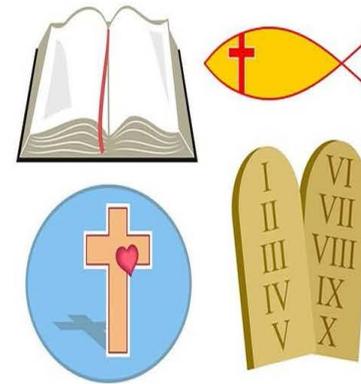


No. 139

No. 138

The leaders in 70 CE would have realized it was time for them to clarify their own position in print, explaining

who they were as followers of Jesus and the connection they had, to Judaism and the Greek philosophy of the Roman Empire.



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No. 140

The followers of Jesus had retained the loyalty that existed within Judaism, to the Commandments of God. But they were also incorporating the approach and world view of Greek philosophy, as set out in the teachings of Paul in the 50's CE.

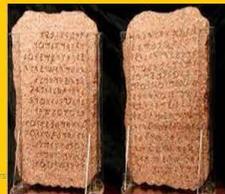
In 70 CE the Christian leadership would have been anxious to show that they were not the same as the Jews, who were now facing the wrath of Rome

Jewish candlestick



Is Christian

The Comandments



The Fir

Roman wreath



No. 141.

However they would have needed to clarify their differences in an oblique way, in order to avoid further persecution themselves.

Arguably, this clarification about similarity and difference, can be found within the **structure** of the Gospels, including the gospel of Mark, which was the first gospel of the Church.



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No. 143

No. 142

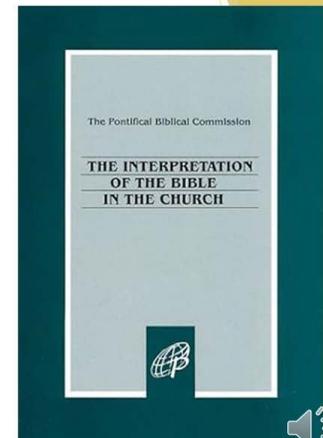
- ▶ A semiotic analysis of this and other gospels clarifies the sociological differences between Judaism and Christianity and also Hellenism (cf. Greek philosophy) and Christianity.
- ▶ (a sociological approach to the gospels, as also other approaches, was recommended in a Church document of 1993 about the interpretation of Scripture)

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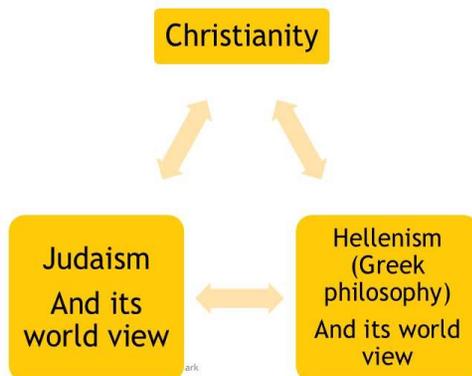
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No. 144



A Sociological analysis shows the coexistence of two world views at the base of Christianity



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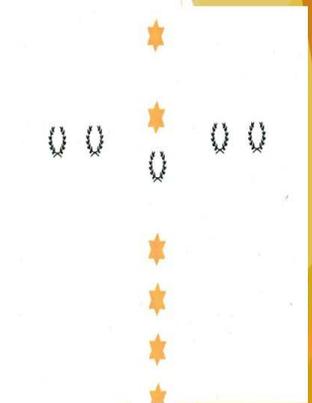
In other words, Christianity is and remains, a hybrid society.

It incorporates two contrasting world views.

(Arguably) one of these is based upon **time** and the other is based on **place**.

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No. 145

► Judaism provided a base on which to observe the moral law of the commandments



► Hellenism provided the flexibility, rationality and idealism of Greek philosophy



The Apostle Paul had explained a new approach to the Commandments

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No. 146

“Thou shalt not kill”

Avoid blood (cf. cruelty)

“Thou shalt not commit adultery”

Avoid fornication (cf. uncommitted sex)

“Thou shalt not steal”

Avoid strangling (cf. unjust business practices)

Paul taught
Protect self-determination

Paul taught
Control sexuality

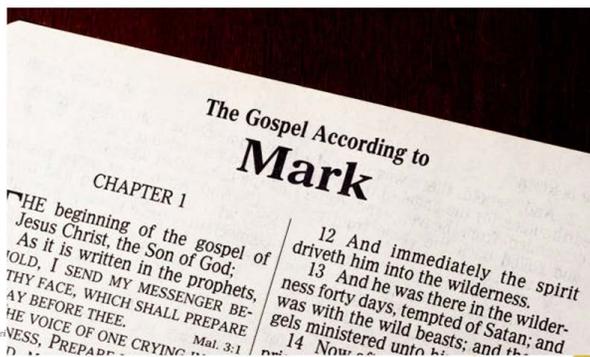
Paul taught
Donate to the needy

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Paul’s “morality map” was continued on, into the text of the gospel of Mark, written in 70 CE. These were based on the teachings of Jesus, based on the Commandments and incorporating philosophy.



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No. 148

► Judaism provided a base on which to observe the moral law of the commandments



► Hellenism provided the flexibility, rationality and idealism of Greek philosophy



The Apostle Paul had explained a new approach to the Commandments

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For instance, in Mark Ch 10 a man approached Jesus asking what could he do to earn eternal life. Jesus said "You know the commandments -

- ▶ Thou shalt not kill,
- ▶ Thou shalt not commit adultery,
- ▶ Thou shalt not steal..."

(Mk 10: 19)

But the young man was looking for more.

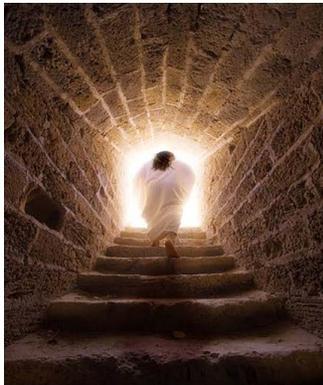


Jesus then said "Go sell what you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven and come follow me" (Mk 10:21), . This compares with --

- ▶ Take on poverty for the sake of others (cf. "Thou shalt not steal")
- ▶ Forego setting up your own household (cf. "Thou shalt not commit adultery")
- ▶ Commit yourself to the empowerment of others (cf. "Thou shalt not kill")



The Other



Mark's gospel shows

the hallmark of a follower of Jesus was to be their concern for the well-being of **others**..

www.valuesclarification.org/ischristianmoralityunique.htm



In Mark and the gospels to follow, the idealism of the Greeks was incorporated into the observance of the Commandments. Their morality compass was raised from the "Thou shalt not" to a positive

How would you define a "follower of Jesus"