

Why is Matthew the First of the Four Gospels?

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Preacher: Dr. Olav Slaymaker

[0 : 00] I'm reminded of an occasion when I was chairing a session in Australia, and a gentleman from India came rushing in at the last moment and asked me if I would allow him to give this presentation, even though he'd forgotten his slides in New Delhi.

And it was in such a rush that he couldn't get his slides together. So I said, well, that sounds okay. I'd like to draw his slides, he said. So at the end of 20 minutes, he was still drawing his first slide. People had great difficulty interpreting exactly what he was talking about. So let me be quite clear that the topic is, why is Matthew the first gospel?

And I don't want to answer this question unambiguously, but I do have some intriguing thoughts and suggestions that came out of a very important Bible study group that's been meeting since October here on a Friday at lunchtime.

And some of them are here. They're wonderful young ladies. And although they may not be young in years, they can't be young in spirit.

[1 : 15] And it's been a wonderful experience for me to hear from them and we share each other's perceptions of what Matthew is doing.

And it's been a great pleasure. And in a sense, what I see this occasion as being is a report to my board of directors.

Because you are the board of directors here. And to actually indicate some responsibility for and accountability to you for what has been going on in this church since last October on a Friday lunchtime.

So please be direct in your comments. If I have and we have somehow distorted the message of Matthew, then we need your prayer and your forgiveness.

Let us open with a word of prayer. We ask, our Father, for your presence and the guidance of your Holy Spirit that everything that we may say and do and think is in accordance with your word.

[2 : 34] And that you would guide us O Lord, our Creator and Redeemer. Amen. So I did bring some slides but I didn't bring my projector so I should pass this around for your enjoyment.

It is possible to see something here. There's an overhead showing four images of the four Gospel writers.

And just to help you along the person we're talking about or the Gospel that we're talking about is that of Matthew. And as you move through you'll see that there are certain symbols associated with each of the Gospel writers.

And you can see that associated with Matthew is a human face. By contrast with Mark who's associated with a lion's face and Luke who's associated with an ox and John who's associated with an eagle for reasons that you may or may not be familiar with.

But the human face associated with Matthew is important in terms of our discussion of why he is the first of the Gospel in the New Testament.

[4 : 04] If you'd like to take a look at it I'm sorry that it's not so clear as it might be but it's a start. Now you may never have thought about this and I'm told by scientists that it's inappropriate to ask the question why?

Because science is unable to explain the why. So therefore this is not a scientific presentation but it is an exploration into the circumstances that gave rise to the presence of Matthew's Gospel at the first position.

Why is this an interesting question? Well we all know that Mark is the oldest source and one might think that if one is thinking in the way that some of us do historically or chronologically that Mark should go first.

We all know that John is the most visionary and the prologue to John's Gospel would seem to be an ideal way to start the New Testament.

And we know that Mark is in enormous hurry as a ravening lion to get on with the job of communicating the Gospel.

[5 : 42] Why wouldn't he be a more appropriate Gospel? Secondly Matthew was a converted tax collector.

Why would he gain primacy in comparison with a true apostle like John? Well Matthew was an apostle and he was an evangelist of course of the first order but John had those insights that are quite remarkable which we're dealing with in our Sunday services here at St.

John's at the moment and the intimacy of John with our Lord is quite remarkable. So in a sense it's surprising that from the point of view of a human view of Matthew why he should be at the beginning.

And then the third reason why I was intrigued was that as a book writer I would like to start a book with something interesting and exciting to grab the attention of the reader.

what we find in Matthew is a boring and lugubrious genealogy of the most extraordinary assortment of people how is this book ever going to sell?

[7 : 08] And yet it has primacy. So it seemed to me that it was an interesting question that we should ask why is he promoted in this way? Well I'd just like to think in terms of two main ways of getting at it.

One is in terms of external evidence which is the tradition of the church and the other would be the internal evidence from inside the book of Matthew itself.

So looking at the external evidence seems to me there are a number of ways in which one might look at this. Most interestingly and as you know I'm not a scholar in this area so there are those in this group who can correct me on this but the most widely read and frequently used gospel in the formative years of the church was St.

Matthew. According to Simonetti who's a distinguished commentator on the early church the faithful who lived between the end of the first and the end of the second centuries came to know the words and deeds of Jesus on the basis of this text.

It was Jerome who around 400 AD established the sequence Matthew, Mark, Luke and John through his Latin translation of the Vulgate.

[8 : 39] Now of course it had already been in part accepted but there was significant debate as to what the sequence should be before that year. And the reason for my passing this overhead about symbols around to you is because the symbols themselves were so important in the early church.

If you imagine yourselves as unable to read, then the text would be of lesser importance than the symbols. And the symbols in this case were significant.

The face of a human, which became associated with Matthew, signified the highest intelligence of the most intelligent created being.

By contrast with the lion of mark, who was the most distinguished and most successful strong animal, by comparison with the ox, who was the most strong agricultural animal.

by comparison with the eagle, the highest of the birds. By contrast, Matthew, the highest of the intelligent community.

[10 : 16] When we listen to Donald Trump, we wonder whether their confidence was misplaced. Nevertheless, that was the understanding in the early church.

And therefore, the association with the human, in the case of Matthew, was a point of high respect. And, interestingly, Matthew became seen as a great teacher.

And the gospel of Matthew has been said to be the teacher's gospel. And I'd like to demonstrate in what ways that is the case later on.

But, just to make the point that the symbols associated with the gospel writers, or the names associated with those gospels, has some significance, in addition to the fact that the symbols themselves derive not only from general agricultural and local myth, but from the book of Ezekiel, the great vision in chapter 1 of Ezekiel, verses 4 to 28, and the vision of St. John the Divine in Revelation chapter 4.

So the whole sort of association of these symbols with each of the gospels was very meaningful, and it was so meaningful, of course, that any of you who have spent time visiting cathedrals in other parts of the world will see these symbols demonstrated both in the stained glass windows and in the

sculptures associated with each of them.

[12:10] Now, of course, the other point is, with respect to the traditional reasons, external to the text, is that there were only Mark, Luke, and Matthew as the candidates for this first position.

John was early eliminated in the sense that he was more recent than the others, and it was really a competition between Mark, Luke, and Matthew.

Neither Mark nor Luke was an original apostle. Mark is best known for his abandoning Paul in Acts chapter 13, and Luke is particularly obscure, even though he wrote more than half of the New Testament, being mentioned by name only once, that is to say in Colossians chapter 4 in the New Testament.

so that the context that developed around Matthew's gospel was it was the teacher's gospel, Matthew was often referred to as the teacher of Israel, he was even compared to another Moses, because of the way in which he moved around, or Jesus moved around the river Jordan, the wilderness, and the mountain, all reminding us of the stories of Exodus.

And so this is a distinctive feature of the way in which Matthew's gospel was interpreted in the early church community.

[13:55] I now have a spectacular overhead somewhere, and this gives, if I could pass this around, this gives the structure of the gospel, and which demonstrates in many ways why this is seen as the teacher's gospel.

The wonderful thing about what we have discovered in Matthew is the way that the whole book is structured, and I'm sure many of you are familiar with this, but it is the most balanced statement of the alternation of narrative and of sermons of any of the gospels.

In other words, as you go from chapters 1 through 4, you have the narrative following the genealogy that I mentioned earlier, the sequence of events in the first few years of Jesus' ministry, and then the Sermon on the Mount, chapters 5 to 7, is the first of the big sermons.

Then you have more narrative showing the healings that Jesus performed, the miracles, and then there is a second sermon, chapter 10, and then you go on, sorry, chapter 8, after the, chapter 10, I can't do that by over here.

Chapter 10 is the second sermon, then what happened in chapter 10? Anybody any thoughts on this?

[16:00] I'll get my little notes here.

So we have the, the Sermon on the Mount is the first sermon, as we know, generally referred to as the manifesto of the kingdom. kingdom, then chapter 10 describes the mission of the kingdom, chapter 13 describes the parables of the kingdom, chapter 18 describes the nature of relationships in community in the kingdom, and then chapters 23 to 25 is this tremendously serious set of judgments, judgments on dead religion, judgment on Israel, judgment on the world, and the confident expectation of Jesus' return.

So alternating between each of these sermons, we have the practical teachings, the practical activities of Jesus in the society of the time.

it gives a perfect balance in terms of teaching and application of what the Christian life is all about, as exemplified by our Lord.

I'm not suggesting that that doesn't exist in the other Gospels, but it's more systematic, it's less concerned about time sequences than, for example, Luke, and it is essentially a statement that we need teaching and we need living in a balanced way.

[17:55] So very often people have latched onto the Sermon on the Mount as saying essentially it's the major thrust of Jesus' teaching, and therefore that's the emphasis we should have.

Another more somber interpretation is we should look at the judgments and come under the judgments. Another says really it's the miracles and the healings that are most important.

What Matthew does is to balance these emphases in a most impressive way. And, of course, the way in which the structure of the Gospel is put out, it starts with essentially a loving, a very practical orientation with limited amount judgment at the beginning, though not without your judgment, but gradually the controversies surrounding Jesus' presence become more and more intense.

And the way in which Matthew gathers this sense of the momentum, and we come towards the most critical period of the prior to the judgments in chapters 23 to 25, we have a very extreme confrontation between the Pharisees, scribes, the elders, and Jesus himself.

And, of course, more and more we see they were determined to put him to death in a sense which could really not have been envisaged from the first part of Matthew.

[19 : 37] It would be very difficult to see that that was going to be the outcome of the Gospel. So I'm not, again, trying to suggest that Matthew is contradicting any of the other Gospels here.

I think we've spent a lot of time, at least in my youth, a lot of time was spent in saying well, really, they're exactly the same, these Gospels, because we wanted to avoid the idea there was any conflict whatsoever.

In effect, it seems to me that the more one sees of the differences, we get a greater sense of the personalities that are writing, we also get a greater sense of the many dimensions of Jesus' own personality.

And if we think of this as the most pedagogic of the Gospels, that gives us one slant, one very important slant, on the character of Jesus and his ministry.

And it's, as I say, the most easy to, thank you, the most easy Gospel therefore to generalize, or to overview in this way.

[20 : 52] Now I should go on to the internal reasons that make Matthew's Gospel a good candidate for the first of the Gospels.

and these of course are by far the most important reasons. And if I were a theologian, I suppose I would emphasize the Christology of Matthew as being the most remarkable.

My personal response is to say that as a bridge between the Old Testament and the New Testament it is impossible for me to imagine a more appropriate first Gospel.

Even this strange genealogy which is the first chapter of Matthew is absolutely critical in terms of binding the Old Testament and the New Testament together.

And I see some people nodding their heads who have obviously gone to great lengths to read and to think about the implications of this.

[22 : 08] And I just draw on some comments from Michael Green's book, The Message of Matthew.

Matthew. A number of women figure in the genealogy.

That might not seem strange in today's climate, but it was startling in a Jewish genealogy. As you all know, Luke chapter three contains the proper genealogy with the line through the males, whereas Matthew's genealogy picks out specifically not only women, but also women of strange repute.

go and between women of Christ. Her ■ had no rights. She could not inherit property or give testimony in a court of law.

She was completely under her husband's power. Trust everybody pays attention. She was seen as less as a person and more as a thing.

[23 : 43] Of course, I'm quoting from Michael Green here. This is not my... The Jewish man thanked God each day that he had not been created a slave, a Gentile, or a woman.

And yet, there are four women in Matthew's genealogy. And what women they were. Tamar was an adulteress, Genesis 38.

Rahab was a prostitute from pagan Jericho, Joshua chapter 2. Uriah's wife Bathsheba was the woman David had seduced and whose first child had died, but through whose subsequent son, Solomon, the royal line was traced.

Second Samuel. Ruth was not even a Jewess at all, but a Moabitess. Can you imagine? And Moabites and their descendants were not allowed near the assembly of the Lord, according to Deuteronomy 23.

These are the women introduced into the genealogy to prepare us for the climax of them all, Mary and her unusual circumstances.

[25 : 00] Matthew could not have introduced a more amazing selection of women wherever he had looked in the pages of the Bible. Why did he introduce them?

Well, this is the most extraordinary change that has occurred as between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The binding of the Old Testament to the New Testament in this way meant that we were looking to a new Israel.

A new Israel that would include people of all ethnic backgrounds, both sinners of Gentile and Jewish background, and the door was to be opened to the whole world to receive the blessings that

had been previously focused on Israel.

So it seems to me this internal evidence, just from the very first chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, is a break in history.

[26 : 14] And it's a break in history that is then reinforced by the fact that Matthew actually uses 60 quotations from the Old Testament to demonstrate how those quotations from the Old Testament were fulfilled fulfilled in the person, life, and death of Jesus.

So you have this strange, to us, strange introduction which is absolutely crucial to the binding of Old and New Testaments. And it just then presages the huge emphasis in Matthew on the fulfillment of the prophecies in the Old Testament in the life and person of Jesus.

these little gaps are meant for you to think carefully.

he's a yes, that's a common feeling.

So the bridge between the Old Testament and the New Testament is made straight away in the first chapter of the first section. The fulfillment of Scripture continues right throughout the Gospel.

[27 : 48] and each sermon, each of the five sermons makes the connection explicitly. The Sermon on the Mount first, the mission of the Kingdom, the whole setup of the parables of the Kingdom, the whole question of the way in which the community of the Kingdom was to grow, and the nature of the Judgment.

The five major sermons. So this bridge verifies that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah of Israel who had brought salvation to Jews and Gentiles alike.

The first verse which says the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham, declares the author's purpose to establish Jesus' identity as the Messiah, the heir to the promises of Israel's throne through David and Abraham, and the Church as the true people of God who transcend ethnic, economic, and religious barriers.

So this is, for me, and I think for some of the good folks who have followed the Gospel this year, the most important and distinctive feature of Matthew.

I'm not suggesting that the Christology is unimportant, but I feel less comfortable in talking about the dramatic range of names given to Jesus in Matthew.

[29 : 33] It's certainly very interesting and very well explained in a number of contexts, but I think that I have been excited by the way in which the Old and New Testaments have been wrapped together.

I should say that I have led and been at many Bible studies on Mark, Luke, and John, but I cannot recall having been at a Bible study on Matthew.

So for me, this is really quite a remarkable and exciting revelation. I'm not suggesting I hadn't read Matthew, but as you know, when you read late in the evening, and your eyelids start to droop, it's not other different than attending a full-scale class.

And so that is why I'm emphasizing what has been born home to me as being quite unique to Matthew. Again, I'm not implying that there's not the same attempt made, but I mean, Mark is in too much of a hurry to deal with that.

And Luke, of course, has got much more elaborate stories to tell, starting with Zechariah, the priest, context of the ox, if you recall, the priestly sacrifice.

[31 : 14] And John, of course, makes the connection in an overview sense. He says, that's not worry about specific links from the last chapter of Malachi to the first chapter of Matthew, but let's look at the whole picture.

And in the beginning, says John. And he goes all the way through. He jumps over this particular hinge, this hinge point.

Another aspect, jumping from the genealogy to the last chapter of Matthew is the fact that Matthew uniquely incorporates the Great Commission.

None of the other gospel writers incorporates the Great Commission. Right? It occurs in Acts, as far as the rest of the scriptures are concerned.

God's mind. So it seems to me that again, the tying in of the Old and New Testament at the beginning, and the moving forward to the Acts of the Apostles, occurs in Matthew 28, uniquely amongst the gospels.

[32 : 33] So there's an overview that is rather different than the overview of John, but it pays attention to the links, what happened before the gospel of Matthew, and what happened after the gospel of Matthew, which is a neat and a scholarly helpful thing from the point of view of the teacher

of Israel, that he's really wrapping the whole thing together.

A couple of other things that are not as important, although for me personally the unique emphasis on mountains in the gospel of Matthew, please forgive my bias here, but if you recall the Sermon on the Mount took place on a mountain, please tell me where.

Anybody have any idea? Well, it's close to Capernaum, overlooking the Rift Valley, and a dramatic overview, which undoubtedly helped to get the Sermon on the Mount across.

What about the judgment sermon? Why was that? Sometimes called the Olivet Discourse, which is a clue.

What about discourse? discourse? Yeah. Now, that is a sign of unusual intelligence.

[34 : 25] Did you know the question? Where is discourse? discourse? It's always that kind of question that brings a class alive, doesn't it?

But, of course, those are not the only two places. You think of the way in which the Mount of Transfiguration is highlighted in Matthew. The sense not suggesting that the study of mountains is necessarily the queen of sciences, but that there is a certain advantage and a symbolism associated with the presence of Jesus on a mountain and the sense of authority.

And again, that's a principle that is extraordinarily well handled in the Gospel of Matthew. The growth in his authority as the authority of the Pharisees declines and the tension between them becomes greater.

This is wonderfully handled in Matthew. Another interesting feature is the unique role of Peter in St. Matthew's Gospel. There are five occasions when Peter's involvement with Jesus.

[35 : 56] They have to do with his involvement in the walking on water and his drowning or near drowning. They have to do with his denial.

And you find them in chapters 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18. In each of those chapters there is a reference to Peter's involvement which is not duplicated in the other Gospels.

So I can see that in the context of the early church and the attempts to reinforce the authority of Peter, this would have some significant value.

I want to make mention of something that's a little bit unique to this particular Bible study group. We were fortunate enough to be able to listen to Johannes Sebastian Bach's St.

Matthew Passion. and it was a little bit out of sequence because it occurred appropriately the week before Good Friday, but as far as our study was concerned we still had a little ways to go.

[37 : 16] But this had a profound influence on several of us. The St. Matthew Passion, which goes just as far as the closing of the tomb, I'll just read a little section which is in this particular recording that we listened to sung by the magnificent bass Dietrich Fisher Disco.

Pilate said unto them, Behold your watchmen, go ye forth and secure the tomb as best you can. So they went forth and secured the tomb with watchmen and sealed the stone.

Now the Lord is brought to rest. My Jesus, good night. O blessed limbs, see how I weep for thee with penance and remorse, that my fall brought thee into such distress.

My Jesus, good night. take while life lasts a thousand thanks for thy passion, that thou didst prize my soul's redemption so dearly.

My Jesus, good night. And the chorus, the final chorus goes, we'd sit down in tears and call to thee in the tomb, rest softly, softly rest.

[38 : 56] Rest, ye exhausted limbs, your grave and tombstone. Shall for the unquiet conscience be a comfortable pillow and the soul's resting place.

peace. In utmost bliss, the eyes slung the there. This, as you may well know, comes at the end of a three-hour recitation of the events leading up to the Passion.

And as a profound reinforcement of the message of Matthew, this has to be one of the most extraordinary experiences. And I think those who are present will agree with me that that was one of the highlights of our study.

And it meant we felt we were kind of connected in a broader sense, not only the gospel itself, but the world into which Christ came, which he came to save, and which has generated such extraordinary outbursts of musical worship and talent.

So you won't find that in any of the standard commentaries about Matthew, but it was one thing that we enjoyed enormously in our study.

[40 : 19] now I would like to end there to get some more feedback.

It's unconventional to end so early, but it seems to be helpful to get some sense of whether I managed to get across the sense of the excitement of the newness for me and for the group of Matthew.

I think it has not had the same priority in the contemporary church as it apparently did in the first few centuries. It's certainly been the case of St.

John since I've been here because in my Bible studies we studied Mark, Luke, John, and Acts, but never left you yet.

So it's interesting to hear what you got. I think that that first chapter does tend to put one off. And that's one looks inside it and gets a sense of why it's there.

[41 : 34] Certainly an uncomfortable read in a group. But I'm not really, I guess I'm not trying to make the case that it's more important than any of the other Gospels.

I'm just really addressing the question of why it's appropriate that it should be number one. And I think the hinge point is critical here. and so there's no intention to have two Bible studies on Matthew for every one of Luke.

Yes? I just have a comment, well two comments. First of all, when you mentioned John, I thought of a huge fishnet because I became a, I came to the Lord in my adult years and what was the first gospel that they, I was part of studying was John.

I thought, why did you do John? But when you mentioned the genealogy story, I thought, yeah, I remember when I looked at that and I thought, oh, this is a tough one. But the other thing, as you mentioned the binding it together, my, Joan sits here every Sunday and knits as we learn, and I thought to myself, what a beautiful analogy.

What he's doing, he's knitting the Old Testament and the New Testament together and because he's knitting it, I think the message to me in your presentation and what I've learned in my Christian walk is he wants me to get it.

[43 : 11] He wants me to be bound to both of those. That's beautiful. That is just love. Well, it's good. Yeah. Well, it's good. This lovely word, binding.

I always remember Marcus Bachfield, I never heard this before I heard him say it, that Matthew begins, it's just the spirit whispering, Matthew does begin the book of the genealogy, and John's gospel ends with the word, that little strange word, if all the books were written that would be written about this man, the world couldn't contain them, and the spirit whispers, these books belong together.

I'm bracketing them, church, that here's a gift. I think such things are in scripture, but only faith will believe these things.

Did anybody in your group say, well, why are we asking this question? Did anybody say that? Yes, they did. And how did you answer? I said, it's a new question for me, and it's a new question for us, and I answered it in terms of how it is an intriguing question, and I'm not pretending to know the answer, but we did have a valuable discussion as to some of these points that we have.

I think it's a good question. Go on record. Yes? It's the most Jewish of all Gospels. And I mean, this is a recent awareness for me, and Hebrews is the other in the New Testament.

[44 : 51] And so I guess, yeah, it should have the first place in the New Testament. And who were the first converts? Jewish?

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, the linking of just the Hebrews, I think, is, very helpful. I think that's another very important thing.

Yes? Who and when was it decided what all the Gospels should be? Well, it was a process over 300-400 years. and I know Jim would have a clearer view on this than I, but it's essentially the determination of the Church by the year 400 that that was going to be the list.

But of course, there was a lot of discussion, a lot of debate, and as you probably know, for example, the Coptic Church feels that St. Thomas' Gospel should be part of the group, and there's a whole bunch of other Gospels which were written at the time, which were eliminated for lack of canonicity, which is a nice way of setting, we don't know why, but we're just not convinced that they are at the same level of authority as the four of the Union.

So, do you wish to add to that? I don't think that anything I can add would make things clearer, but it is a fact that Jerome's work as the translator of the whole New Testament meant that the order in which he passed out the books that he had put into Latin was a very weighty factor, and counted for anything more than anything else in the story.

[47 : 12] does. I think it's that there are two stages here. One is that the authentic writings of apostles were being gathered.

That was going on for the first 200 years actually. They were being gathered and the spurious writings, gospels, and epistles that bore apostolic names, but which were not and were recognized as not being by the apostles whose names they bore.

That weeding out process, as I say, that took about 200 years. Jerome did his stuff in the fourth century, century, and in the fourth century, I think it's fair to say, the church as a whole internalized the idea that the New Testament is a whole, that is the collection of 27 books that belong together and throw light on each other and form in a very profound sense a theological unity.

That idea established itself pretty much in the church. So Jerome is one of our saints. He appeared on the UCP list of official recognized saints.

Do we know where he came from? I wasn't asking myself. Well, this is so, the story is like a snowball rolling and decreasing in size as it rolls downhill.

[49 : 28] That is, the more the early church got into the habit of treating the gospel, treating the New Testament books as a unity, well, the more it got into that same habit, the habit became deeper and deeper and more firmly established.

the more people are interested. So Jerome comes from Croatia, which is an area which is not often acknowledged as a major source of inspiration, although of course it was closer to the center of things at the time, but Jerome is a figure that sounds as if he might be from the western United States.

and I think a lot of people have no idea who Jerome was. And this extraordinary action of translating the volume is something for which we need to be appreciative.

So I think that's the point of my question. I think you provided us the context. Well, the snowboard continues to work.

in modern New Testament study, each of the books is constantly isolated from the others.

[50 : 46] For detailed examination, you have commentaries on this gospel, that gospel, that epistle, and so on. But all of these commentaries are written against the background of this shared assumption that the New Testament is a unity.

And that you don't get it right unless you see it as a unity. Well, that's precisely the slide answer. Well, it is not. I'm just so delighted.

That's just what you asked me to do. Thanks. Thank you very much. Julie? I think Myron was ahead of me.

Weren't you, Martin? Oh, no, I'm just scratching. I think, I think in all the previous studies that I did with Matthew, the idea of proof texting was the way these quotations from the Old Testament were used.

But I think from the point of view of andragogy, which some of you will recognize as a word that means adult education, as opposed to pedagogy, it's an excellent tool because the Jews would know the things he was talking about.

[52 : 03] So he was reminding them of these have an importance with regard to the Messiah. And the Gentiles, who didn't know the Old Testament at all, are encouraged to see the story of Jesus as part of a much bigger continuum.

And I found that an interesting feature. I was in that little group of bolus, and let me tell you, even people who have been studying the Bible since they were five, which is my experience, I learned a lot of new insights.

It was really great, and we learned from each other as well as from all of them. Sheila was one of the other ladies. So have you decided your group, and there's a famous poster to this effect, but is Bok the fifth evangelist?

No, it's just sheer good fortune and believing in the Holy Spirit, I believe. I happen to have a recording of this wonderful piece of work, and it just seemed to fit the mood of the group.

Yes? Thank you for a wonderful talk, I love the fact that you began with art and you ended with art.

[53 : 26] I was just meditating a bit on what you were saying about the different gospels, having different personalities, being written by different beings, beings, and how God has used those stylish differences in character of the men that wrote these things, and I never really thought too much about that.

As an artist, of course, I was always really attracted to John, because he was a crazy artist too, and he spoke to me. But Matthew, the analysis in Matthew, a tax collector, a bureaucrat, somebody who lived analysis, had to, applying that kind of a mind to these amazing series of events is very, very specific, isn't it?

It's a different facet that we need to flesh out, and that's what came through so well to me. Thank you. Fascinating. Thank you very much. It struck me in the context of remembering my teenage years, which is kind of difficult to read.

that this whole sort of emphasis on trying to just hide any apparent contradictions, any different emphasis between the Gospels was the kind of sense I got from the context where I was living. And rather than saying the beauty of this is the whole revelation from four different perspectives on this one person. I mean, the greatest person who's ever lived can't have four different aspects.

[55 : 08] That seems very odd. But of course, it just meant we were limiting ourselves unnecessarily to a single-dimensional Jesus instead of getting the sense of the four-dimensions.

Really, it should be an n-dimensional Jesus. Well, it's not falling asleep, so I will.

Well, yeah, I'll return to the rolling snowball. Biblical scholars strike me as not wanting to look at that rolling snowball a whole lot.

Because it may put too much authority into the hands of the patristics or even the Roman Catholic Church.

And I remain unrepentant and Protestant, but nonetheless, there is that rolling snowball over several hundred years, which brings to mind the question of the Church and the Holy Spirit and the decision that were made while that snowball was rolling.

[56 : 27] And for biblical scholars, at least Protestant biblical scholars, tend to not want to deal too much with that, but maybe that's a misrepresentation.

question that, or an observation that I see.

But perhaps there are strong signs that we're overcoming that with the maturing of conservatives fellowship, that there's more of the sense of the holism, the Church, obedient to the revelation.

Thank you.