

# Composing the Gospels

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[ 0 : 00 ] Thank you so much for your welcome. And now, I have a surprise for you, which may make you wish you hadn't been quite so enthusiastic.

When you get into your 90s, as I have done, your memory for recent things may become more problematical in more ways than you had ever anticipated.

And, don't nod your head. I'm there already. Well, okay, I mean, if you don't mind that people draw the wrong conclusion.

Righto, on I go. I have got into my 90s. There's no way round that. And yesterday, I planned what I thought was a fruitful talk.

And this morning, when I got up very early, just to round it off, I found that everything I'd planned had come to pieces in my mind and didn't make sense as a single presentation at all.

[ 1 : 49 ] Not in the way that I thought it did yesterday. Can you imagine such a thing? Yes. Oh, yes. And heads are nodding right, left, to the center.

Okay. Well, here we are. Here we are. Here we are. Here we are. The fellowship of the irrational. And what are we going to do today?

That's the next question. Well, what I had thought I was going to do, and what I could still be allured back to, if I think, if the right lead-in questions come up, is the way in which the way in which the...

Here again, you see the 90-degree problem. I thought I knew what I wanted to say. And lo and behold, when I get up to saying it, I don't.

From which the only thing that can be logically deduced, I think, is that...

[ 3 : 29 ] Well, how can I say it? You took a big risk in asking me to speak today, and you will have to live with the consequences of it for the rest of your life.

What I was going to do is to make some suggestions...

No, inferences. Draw some inferences about the special significance of each of the three, each of the four Gospels in relation to the other three.

And as I said, we may get back to that. I'm not sure, but putting it together the way that I planned, no. All right.

But I will start by talking about the four Gospels, if you'll stay with me with goodwill while I do that.

[ 4 : 50 ] And then the discussion can move whichever way it wants to move. And I don't know what that will be any more than you do.

Pause. Pause. While I allow for protests to arise from the gallery.

Nobody in the gallery. Nobody in the gallery wants to protest. On then we'll go. And here we will start.

And I'm going to invite you to reflect with me on the four Gospels.

And to think of a reason, a line of reasoning, which tells us why there might be four as distinct from three or five or nine or whatever.

[ 6 : 05 ] You may wonder what I'm going to say next. Well, the only way to satisfy your curiosity is to say it.

And this I will. It's generally agreed among scholars that of the four Gospels, the one which is most like notes of ongoing business is Mark.

Mark is a down-to-earth writer who focuses very sharply on Jesus all the time, or virtually all the time, and clearly knows what he's about, and is doing something which writers, secular writers, in the first century and, well, indeed, in the early centuries, both B.C. and A.D., quite often did.

Mark drops a clue as to his identity. That is, he produces his piece of work for inspection, and he includes in it a detail which will guide those in the know.

as to who he is. Then he doesn't have to give his name as the author, which he doesn't.

[ 8 : 07 ] What am I talking about? I'm talking about the detail which has often been commented on, without, I think, people seeing the full force of it.

The detail in the account of Jesus' arrest that tells us that there was a young man whom they tried to arrest, but he wriggled out of his cloak, and it says rather, how can I say it, rather breathtakingly, that he fled away naked into the night.

Well, this is, I think, and scholars generally think, this is John Mark dropping a hint in the text as to who he is.

He doesn't give his name. He doesn't give his name. No, well, it wasn't part of the convention that you should do that.

But it does give a detail about him, which can be picked up at a later stage by perceptive and knowledgeable people.

[ 9 : 41 ] And we should realize he isn't the only one who does that.

All four evangelists leave, shall I call them, literary finger marks on their text, which would enable knowledgeable people to recognize who had written these things.

Well, wait a minute, you say, you're going ahead rather fast. Did everybody know who John Mark was to make the recognition?

The answer is no, but don't switch off too soon.

It was a convention that had been established before ever BC turned into AD, and you can find examples of it in secular writing in Latin and Greek about this and that.

[ 11 : 08 ] And the knowledge that's needed to, how can I say, to turn the key and identify the author, that knowledge, though not part of our culture, was thought of as a familiar element in the ancient cultures, which wrote in Latin and Greek, as I said.

What this amounts to is a clue.

You've all of you read detective stories, so you know what clues are. And if you ask how the clues are.

And if you ask how the clue works, well the answer is, there are in the ancient society for which the author, the anonymous author, wrote his material, there are among them, people who in some significant way, and I shouldn't be saying people, I should be saying a person, who in some significant way, some widespread way, matches the hint that's been dropped in the text.

Say, what are you talking about? Well, I'm talking about the fact that, first of all, John Mark doesn't identify himself in his Gospel as the author.

[ 13 : 10 ] I'm talking, secondly, I'm talking about the fact that John Mark's mother was, as we know from Acts, an inhabitant of Jerusalem, who gave great support to Christian faith in the early days.

And it was to her house, you'll remember, that Peter went on one occasion when he'd been miraculously released from prison.

Do you remember that? No. No. That very fact tells you this lady and any other members of her household that were linked with her, we may not be told anything like the whole roster of those, but she certainly, in her house, in her house in Jerusalem, was one of the, what shall I say, the foundation stones of the Christian community there.

And one infers from the fact that a maid appears in the X story that it was a well-to-do house where the heir of the family, assuming John Mark to be this, the heir of the family, the heir of the family would have all sorts of privileges in his later teens and would move around Jerusalem and get to know quite a lot about Jerusalem in the way that the sons of the family were.

And one of the family would have all sorts of privileges in the family, which are the children of many contemporary families, which are fairly well-to-do. They have a lot of freedom in moving around and getting to know people, places and things.

[ 15 : 49 ] And then we know that Mark later, after a stumble, I mean a stumble vocationally, when he'd started off as a companion of Paul and gave up before the journey was finished, he, as we can now say and see, wasn't up to it then.

Yes, he was very interested in Jesus, but no, he hadn't the guts for what mission required of him.

And so he pulled out. And he had to, well, to live that down. And when I say live, I mean live. Not just talk it down, but live in a way that convinced the people who were bearing the burden and heat of the mission, that he was stronger than he had been. And if they took him again, he would be worth his weight in gold, shall I say.

And the person who stood by him again, we know, at least expect we do expect we all remember, was Barnabas, who also, in Paul's early days as a Christian, stood by him and worked with him and so forth.

Well, what are we learning? We are learning that Mark was a person sufficiently well known amongst, what shall I call it, well, I'll say believers, although saying believers at this stage raises all sorts of questions.

But Mark was a person well enough known among believers for the hint to be picked up. And in these days, nearly two millennia afterwards, scholars pick up the same hint today and you'll find it in the commentaries.

[ 18 : 25 ] Probably you'll find it in commentaries. Probably you'll find it in commentaries, or books of commentary type. Oh, right. That is Mark telling you who he is.

The scholars who write commentaries on Mark tend to stop there. I mean, they don't even raise the question of Matthew and John, who also were close to the Lord Jesus in his days on earth.

But they, both of them, left the world. Gospels. Gospels being, let's say it now, then I shall not have to discuss it later.

Gospels being presentations of Jesus which tell the reader what he needs to know to be a disciple. That's what it comes to. Gospels being, let's say it now, not all books about people to whom you are a disciple will be books about them.

[ 19 : 52 ] But that is what we seem to have here. Here. All right.

Matthew adds to Mark, but he hardly subtracts from Mark.

There's only about three dozen verses in Mark that aren't simply lifted, virtually intact, into Matthew's Gospel, which encourages you to think in terms of a process that went like this.

First of all, we have to recognise that Mark's Gospel really is lacking, lacking in moral teaching.

It isn't long enough. Question. Why isn't it long enough? Answer. And this, now, is something which you won't find in all the commentaries, because a lot of the people who write commentaries on New Testament books don't seem to know anything about the first century book trade.

[ 21 : 29 ] Well, you may say, I don't know anything about it either. Tell me something. Okay, I will. So, in the first and second centuries, a book trade was developing throughout the Roman Empire, at least in centres of education, learning.

The shape of the book trade was that a person writes a book and he gives it to a person that we would nowadays call a publisher.

Okay. Okay. Okay. In what form does it come to the publishing? Well, now, in those days, I want to say, a paper industry was developing.

And the paper industry took the form of, well, institutions that we would call factories, though they were quite small by comparison with modern factories.

But yes, factories. But yes, factories. What went on in the factories? Well, all over the Roman Empire, it seems, what went on was the making of loose sheets of papyrus, or whatever it was that they were, whatever form of paper they were manufacturing.

[ 23 : 24 ] Then, so many loose sheets, a standard number, were sewn together. Yes, when I say sewn, I do mean S-E-W-N.

There was a form, some form of togetherness, which could be used to sew.

Now, nobody knows, at least I don't think anybody knows, how many dozen of the loose sheets of paper would be sewn together.

But they would be sewn together. And then, the person who eventually is going to make his house a shop and display books for sale in his shop window, the person that nowadays we would call the bookseller, he would purchase the...

The... The... The... The... The... Let's call it a unit. They called it, in Latin, a codex.

[ 24 : 48 ] There were two lengths of codices, standard lengths, the long codex and the short codex.

And the route, the codices, that's a Latin plural, by the way, codices. The... The... The... The route, the codices took into the shop window was via a back room, well, a large back room.

You could call it, you could call it the factory, if you like, where there would be rows of slaves sitting, with writing materials before them, copying the text into codex after codex.

Thus, you see, a bookseller might have 50 or 60 copies of a book, all ready for sale, within, shall we say, three months or something like that, of handing the...

handing a copy of the script to each unit of slaves. I say units because, um, there was a certain amount of cunning displayed by wise slaves in the factory back room.

[ 26 : 34 ] Uh, they... You may have seen pictures of this because the pictures get into children's books, though they don't get into adult books, at least not adult books that I have seen.

Um... Clever slaves would make a framework apparatus, uh, out of, uh, branches or something equivalent.

Uh, they would, uh, they would, uh, they... They would be nailed together to form a pattern. And then, uh, pens, uh, or the equivalent, uh, would be fixed into them.

And the big deal would come when it was time to write, and you would have a string of, uh, um...

Um, uh, uh, ink...

I'll call it inkwells. I don't know the Latin words, I confess, for ink and all the various forms of writing material. Uh, but...

[ 27 : 51 ] That's where the, um, the pens would be dipped. And then you could, um, write the text of, uh, say, half a dozen copies of the book for sale.

Um... And save a great deal of time. And, um... Make a great deal of profit for the bookseller.

Do you get the idea? Uh, well, we don't know how, uh... How big a deal this was becoming in various parts of the world.

It's only ever referred to in the... The literature of the ancient world, uh, incidentally. So you don't get a full description of the setup, as I have tried to give you one now.

But, um, this is what they were actually doing. And, um, books were happening.

[ 29 : 00 ] And, um, with that knowledge under your belt, you look at the four Gospels, and you are encouraged by the evidence to say, these four books look as if they were written to be sold in the bookseller's front window.

And so they were being published not simply to meet all the requests from all the churches that were being formed at that time.

Well, whatever time that was. Uh, dates is another question. I'll come back to that in a moment. But, um... Yes.

That's, um... That's, um... That's how it... How it seems to have been. New Testament scholars are not interested in the book trade.

They're only interested in the letters and the words. And, um... Sociological historians interested in the history of publishing, they're not particularly interested in the New Testament.

[ 30 : 31 ] So, the New Testament documents that appear to have been produced this way don't catch the specialist interest of any of the people who study the ancient world.

At least, not in English. My knowledge doesn't enable me to say whether they pick this up in Germany, which is the other great centre of studying the cultural past.

And we're not going into that either. I'm just trying to... I'm trying to give you the total set-up so that you realise what was happening, and are able to read the Gospels in light of your knowledge of what was happening.

And, uh... Then, it seems to me, you see something which otherwise you wouldn't have seen, and which people who don't know anything about the book trade never do see.

Namely, um... How this material first got on the market to become standard.

[ 32 : 00 ] Well, now I'm going to rev up. Um... Mark's Gospel appears to be, um...

either, uh... a little, uh... how can I say... a little much for a short codex, or, um...

enough for a loose... I mean a sort of, uh... spaced out, um...

long codex, and the bookseller, with his, uh... slaves in the back room, could decide which he wanted, and get them to write it.

See? Uh... But, um... When Mark... Mark... Now, I've got to assume, you see, that this is correct, and go on from here, by guesswork.

[ 33 : 07 ] When Mark had, uh... got his Gospel on the market, with the hint at its authorship, although not his name, although not his name, well, there was a man named Levi, a Hebrew name, who, uh... worked for the Romans, and had, um...

uh... uh... a name that was becoming, uh... well... well known in... Roman... in... sorry, Latin-speaking circles, the name of Matthew, um...

and this man named Matthew, he had been made one of the disciples, one of the twelve disciples, by the call of Jesus himself, and the effect of, uh...

the effect of that had been, um... that he... he brought all, all the, um... the skills and interests of his previous trade, as an accountant, um... that is a public, uh... a public accountant, a tax collector, he brought all those skills to his reading of Mark, and, uh... [ 34 : 47 ] his heart told him, hey, Mark has got, uh... together, all the... all the key facts, that people need to know about the ministry of Jesus, and the...

the calling of disciples, but, uh... he hasn't, for whatever reason, put into his book, hardly anything at all, um...

he has hardly put in anything at all, about the code of Christianity, that is, the moral standards, that Jesus had taught, and it came upon Matthew, that he, a very precise, detailed man, um... who'd spent years and years being exact about figures, um... he could... produce... the code, and fit it into... Mark's outline, and then, Mark's handbook, on discipleship, will be twice as much value, as it...

[ 36 : 16 ] as it was before. Do you get it? And... that somehow, happened, we don't know any of the details, the details.

We do know, that Matthew's Gospel emerged, and that, um... he chose to call it, the Gospel, or at least, to speak, speak of it, in the text, as the Gospel of the Kingdom, that's what Jesus was teaching, that's the message, the substance of which, is contained in this text.

So, I think the natural guess is that when Matthew wrote his Gospel, he thought it would supersede Mark, in a way that was entirely praiseworthy, because the job he had done, needed to be done by somebody.

Otherwise, the meaning of Christian discipleship, would never be as clear as it might be. And the comment, perhaps, at this stage is, wasn't anyone else then, writing...

writing a Gospel, or anything like a Gospel, at this time? When are we, at this time? Well, we may be in the 50s, we may even be in the 40s.

[ 37 : 57 ] Jesus had been executed, probably, in 30 AD. We know that. Alright, so... On we go.

And very soon, the Church perceived that Mark and... Mark and Matthew were both very skilled jobs of work.

Jobs of work. And one can go, one can write long footnotes about the skills involved in putting it all together the way that they did.

And then, it would be in everybody's interest to have the two books side by side in the bookseller shops.

So, that's what happened. And... Now I have to divert slightly and talk about dates.

[ 39 : 05 ] If you read any of the standard books on the New Testament material, you will find that what they say about the Gospels is that the four were written, it seems, by...

somewhere in the 90s. John wrote the last one as a very old man. Uh... Luke wrote the one before, back in the 70s or 80s.

Well, wait a minute. I am blowing the whistle with great respect to the New Testament historicals, historical researchers.

I am one of the few who think that those dates are quite wrong. And I'll tell you why. First of all, they're thought to be right because otherwise, it is argued, all the stuff that Jesus presented at the end of his life in prophetic form about the coming sack wrecking of Jerusalem, which happened in AD 70, no question about that.

All of that is not... so, one may argue, all of that it's supposed would not have been in the document if the document had been later than the sack of Jerusalem.

[ 41 : 12 ] I'm sorry, I said that backwards. Would not have been there if the document had been earlier than the sack of Jerusalem. That is precisely where I think the mistake gets made. But who have I got on my side who thinks that, well, let's say it in a single breath, all the way of the sack of Jerusalem were written before the sack of Jerusalem.

And I think that, well, let's say it in a single breath, all four gospels were written before the sack of Jerusalem. where did I get that from? Well, let's say it in a single breath, all four gospels were written before the sack of Jerusalem.

Where did I get that from? Well, the fact that it's generally thought that John's Gospel reads like a kind of appendix to the first three, assuming all the things that they assumed and taking them further in terms of fellowship with the Lord Jesus which transforms everything.

That's really the subject matter of John's Gospel. I think you will agree without argument. Fellowship with Jesus transforms everything.

And what is... I'm sorry. I'm sorry. When you're in your nineties, sentences can fall apart in your mind.

[ 43 : 03 ] Mm-hmm. Then they think you're daft. And the wisest thing perhaps is to apologize for haste and leave the room quickly.

LAUGHTER But no, what I'm saying seriously here is that the... No, sorry.

It still won't come clearly. Muddle in the mind a new experience in one's nineties. Bother.

I am serious actually. I've never... I've never had... muddles in the mind before... before I was nineteen. I'm getting them now and I don't know when they'll come and every now and then I find myself in one the moment I don't know how to get out of it.

Let me take a deep breath, start a new sentence and try and put some of this in order. Um... You... I'll... I'll... Yes. Let me...

[ 44 : 16 ] let me... let me start... where... how can I say it? Where you may be surprised to see me starting. Um... Have you ever heard of Bishop John Robinson?

Yes. Yes. Yes. Did you know that he wrote a book called, um... Honest to God? Mm...

And that that book was, um... condemned by nearly everybody who did theology in English. Um... that is... around the world, quite literally.

Mm... Mm... Uh... Did you know that this same John Robinson was a conservative New Testament scholar?

And that he published a book, uh... on the composition of the New Testament, the whole New Testament. And that he argued, and this is the milk in the coconut that, uh...

[ 45 : 35 ] I'd lost touch with a moment ago. He had argued that all four Gospels, as well as all the other books of the New Testament, were written before AD 70, before the fall of Jerusalem.

And, um... that he turned the argumentation of other professional scholars on its head by arguing, if...

the... if Jerusalem had already... had already fallen, well, the New Testament wouldn't be, um...

full of material which seems to point forward to its fall. Mm... And, um... there's no answer, I think, to that.

So, on that matter, not on the other, I confess, but on that matter, I'm with John Robinson. No. And I invite you to be with him, too.

[ 46 : 53 ] Because it's the only position that makes sense. Mm... If it hasn't happened yet, well... you can understand people talking about, uh...

the, uh... certainty of prophecy being fulfilled, and, um... how grim it's going to be for some.

Uh... I dare say that a lot of the discussion, and the, in the towns and so forth, would have been like our discussion here in Vancouver of the big one.

Mm-hmm. We talk about it, and then we talk about something else. We don't, do we, regard the threat of the big one as the in the certain certain future reality in terms of which we should order our present lives.

You get that? We don't. The word is denial. Yes. Yes. Well, um...

[ 48 : 09 ] this, this was, uh... this was Robinson's argument. See? Uh... If it, uh... if these books had been written after the big one, it's not likely that it would have been presented as...

as a future event which we had to take, which readers had to take account of. It's, uh... It's much more likely that it would be presented as a future event to take account of if, in fact, it hadn't happened yet.

There are a number of places in the New Testament which seem to point forward to the sack of Jerusalem in AD 70. Robertson made his case and people, uh...

smiled and nodded and went on denouncing honest to God because that's what they were interested in at that time. So, uh...

for better or for worse, Packer and John Robertson stand together on the dates of the New Testament. Hmm...

[ 49 : 25 ] I think he was right in just about every... every turn of the road in his argument. Okay, so where does that put us?

Uh... with regard to Matthew and Mark, I mean. Well... it seems to me much more natural to say that Mark's Gospel, we think, would have been produced at least in its first form.

We don't know if there were more than one... there was more than one form, but anyway, it would be produced in its first form within ten years of Jesus' death and resurrection and ascension. That's, it seems to me, the natural guess. People don't just think of ten years, a ten-year gap. How far back does that take us?

Um... It seems... it seems to me that, um... there... but it's inconceivable that there wouldn't have been a sense of urgency about Jesus and everything he did and taught.

[ 50 : 50 ] um... uh... that ur... that sense of urgency would, uh... develop very soon after his ascension. So...

I won't argue that... further... I can't... I can't prove it as certain. I can only say, don't you think it really does sound probable? I think it's probable and I shall treat it...

I treat it as a certainty for arguing about other things, exploring other things. Okay, so... let's suppose that Mark's Gospel was written about forty.

Let's suppose that, uh... Matthew, seeing what was needed, was able to produce his Gospel about, uh...

well, towards the end of the next decade. Let's say that. We're being generous, I think. Uh... if I had had to guess, without help from any outside source, I think I would have guessed by forty...

[ 52 : 03 ] that it would exist by forty-five. five. And, um... very soon it was obvious that the Church needed both Gospels, and, uh...

that the... that Matthew wasn't going to kill Mark, just, uh... just the opposite. Uh... people would read Mark, and, uh...

people who'd already read Matthew would say, you know, there's a... there's a lot more about Jesus that you ought to know, and it's in here. And they would, um...

they would then be reading Matthew alongside Mark. And what do you say about the... about the other two Gospels? Well, first thing that you could say is that, um...

John's Gospel doesn't have to follow Luke's. Um... John's Gospel, after all, comes from the same circle as Matthew and Mark.

[ 53 : 16 ] But it's developing an aspect of Jesus' teaching that is, the difference that Jesus makes in human lives. Um...

the difference that he makes through union with God, God the Father, and with himself. And the Holy Spirit, although...

to make his point about the Father and the Son as strongly as possible, John isn't tremendously strong on what he says about the Holy Spirit.

But, um... that, I think, is what's happening in John. And it seems to me that, uh... John's Gospel could have been written in the 50s, early 50s, much more naturally than if you suppose it was written in the 90s, as the majority of critics do.

And then, what about Luke? Oh, wait a minute. One thing I haven't told you. Um...

[ 54 : 30 ] Both Matthew and John use the signature story trick that, um...

you find in... in, uh... Mark. John, um... sorry, Matthew's signature story comes straight after we hear his name for the first time.

Well, wait a minute. We don't hear his name for the first time because he's still called. This is, uh... Matthew writing about himself. And he's still called Levi because he's still on the payroll of, uh...

the... the... the... the Romans who employed Jews as public tax collectors and made a big deal of... of doing so because it was from Jews on Jews that the taxes had to be collected.

And if it was Jews who were doing the collecting well, all the odium would go to these Jews rather than to the Roman government for what they were doing in, uh...

[ 55 : 46 ] claiming too much money and so forth. and so forth. All right. Well, there... there it is. In Matthew... I think it's Matthew 10. And then, um...

John, three times, refers to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved. Which is rather bold. but, um... there's a testimonial at the back of the Gospel the last chapter which says, uh...

and obviously it isn't John who's writing this that John is the disciple who wrote these things and we know that his testimony is true.

Well, you and I know what testimonials are for. they are to guarantee the truth, trustworthiness, and reliability of whatever it is that is being attested to.

Um... in this case, it's the Apostle John. Well, time's run out and I can't tell you anymore. I thought we were going to have a discussion but, uh...

[ 57 : 00 ] no, you can see we aren't. because I'm afraid I've eaten up all the time myself. But, um... anyway, that's where I... where I put John.

I think he wrote his Gospel in the 50s. And then what about Luke? Well, scholars read the opening words of Luke and they don't realize that this is, um...

Luke's, uh... discreet performance of the signature trick. What he says is, uh...

you may remember, um... whereas many have taken in hand to write accounts of Jesus, I, having known about everything from the start, uh...

now write this and dedicate it to... and dedicate it to you, Philotheo... Philothe... Philothe... it should be, um...

[ 58 : 07 ] um... O Theophilus! O Lover of God! The form is that of a proper name. But, what he is actually doing is develop...

is dedicating his book to all who want to know God and love God and get the benefit of the wisdom that Jesus brought and the saving work that he did.

And, uh... I need... I need another... best part of an hour, I'm afraid, to explain how, in my judgment, Luke did it.

Because I think... I think the evidence is fairly clear. But we can't do that now. All right. I'm saying for the moment only that, uh...

Luke's Gospel, I think, was the last to be written. And that it was written in a way which, uh... was intended to, um...

[ 59 : 17 ] find it a place in the volumes of history writing that existed at that time. There were a number of historians whose works had already been published in the manner that I referred to at the start.

Uh... Luke wants his work to join their number. And, um... not just part one, but part two. Uh... when he gets back to Philothea, the lover of God, and dedicates to him a second volume, which we call Acts.

Yeah. Uh... And when was that written? Um... I think the, uh... stimulus for it came from the fact that Luke, who was already the sort of writer who makes a good historian, and knew he was, Luke found himself with time on his hands because Paul was being kept in prison.

This is in Acts, um... and you'll be able to... to look it up. Paul was in prison, uh... at the will of Festus, the Roman governor.

That's... that's the right way round, isn't it? And when, um... Or have I got it muddled? I was going to say, when Festus, uh...

[ 60 : 56 ] finished his time and the new governor came, the new governor had, um... a Jew from Rome come down to, um...

Caesarea, um... almost at once, to say what the problem... what problem the Jewish leadership had with this man, Paul, who was in prison for, uh...

his ministry... his ministry of the truth concerning Jesus. And, um... those two years, which, when they started, looked as if they might go on forever because nobody knew...

nobody could tell at that stage how long it would be before, um... Festus's, uh... Festus's, uh... uh... governorship lasted. Um... Luke says, by the way, explicitly, you may remember, that, um... he left...

[ 62 : 04 ] Ephesus left Paul in prison without any prospect of a case in court which might result in his release. He kept Paul in prison as a favor to the Jews.

See, that detail becomes... becomes rather significant now because... here is Luke then with, um... what seems likely to be a lot of time on his hands and he's anchored in, uh... in Palestine and he realizes I could do detailed research into the birth of Jesus and all the details there and so off he went and did it and then, uh...

wrote it up as the first two chapters of his Gospel. Well, uh... I would argue that as, uh...

an appropriate guess. You can't say it's certain but equally you can't say it's nonsense. Uh... you can see that at home. Well, alright.

[ 63 : 27 ] And he researched the early days of Jesus. He researched, um... the ministry of Jesus. He found a lot of stuff which hadn't got into Matthew or Mark or John.

And, um... when he... well, as he remembered all through that, um... what was going to please the Jews about Paul's continued imprisonment was that he wouldn't be able to take the Gospel to Rome.

Um... Luke, in faith, said in his heart, I think he will. I think his release will come.

And, lo and behold, so it did. Uh... you remember, uh... the exchange with, uh... Agrippa um... led to Agrippa saying to, um... oh, what's the name of the Roman governor? Just for the moment it won't come. Um... Anyway, uh...  
[ 64 : 44 ] Agrippa says to him, this chap could have been released if he hadn't appealed to Caesar. Well, Luke has already written why it was that Mark...  
that, uh... Paul appealed to Caesar. Um... there was, uh... a plot going which would have resulted in his assassination. And, um...  
so... so, uh... to... to cut the long story short, uh... Luke... Luke goes on with the tale. Um... the tale of Paul, now, he's found out enough about the... about Jesus to fill a long codex of Jesus' history which would have in it, uh...  
approaching half the material distinctive to Luke in some way. And so, um...  
[ 65 : 52 ] and so it works out. Uh... Luke got into this because Luke saw himself...  
well... no, I won't put it that way. Luke knew that he was the sort of man who wrote good history. He asked the right questions and he wrote in the manner of a historian.  
And if I had time, which I don't... Um... no, I don't, Alexander. don't be anxious. Uh... Um... I would have pursued that.  
No, I think the order is Matthew... sorry, Mark, Matthew, John, Luke. And having got that far in this amount of time, uh...  
I will be courteous to you, friends, of lust... and piped down. . .  
[ 67 : 06 ] . . . . .