

1. Important Background

Up until the middle of the 19th century, most educated people ‘knew’ the story of the Gospel and of the Gospels that told it. The early Church Fathers had passed down the traditions that the Gospels were written in the order we have them in our Bibles. Furthermore, they knew a lot about the eponymous authors, **Luke** was ‘Lucius’ referred to by Paul, one of the 72; **Mark** was John Mark, who travelled with both Peter and Paul; **Matthew** wrote first in Hebrew/Aramaic before being translated into Greek and **John** was possibly the Apostle but maybe another member of Jesus’ wider group of 72 disciples.

But the consensus was blown apart by radical criticism from different schools, first in Germany and then the United Kingdom. The Church Fathers made mistakes and sometimes contradicted each other, so they could not be trusted at all. Instead we would understand the Gospel from scientific research within a framework of 20th century assumptions. Now the origins of the Christian Church were a dark mystery and the Gospels represented the output of different religious communities in constant debate and argument with each other.

Bold, but totally false assumptions became accepted ‘truths’, so ‘Matthew’s Gospel shows no signs of having been written in Aramaic or Hebrew before translation’ still holds sway in some quarters despite the huge body of work that now exists on the Aramaisms of grammar, thought and sources found in **Matthew** by comparison with contemporary documents.

At the same time new investigative techniques have been confirming the accuracy of the Gospel accounts to social practices and the geography of Jerusalem that was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD. And new Gospel fragments have been found that just keep getting earlier and earlier. And so, a consensus has been formed. The Gospels were written between 65 AD and 85 AD! Because they can’t have been written later.

But the internal evidence in the Gospels themselves is that they were in fact written much earlier. It would be clear that they were all completed before 70 AD if it wasn’t for what they were and what they claimed. For instance, there is not one single explanatory reference to either the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple nor to how things used to be before this event in any Gospel. In fact, the Gospels refer to institutions and locations in the present tense that didn’t exist after the destruction, from the Sadducees and Herodians to the Pool of Bethesda - the Gospels assume they all exist. But none of them did after 70 AD.

A generation ago the likes of John Wenham (Evangelical), JAT Robinson (Liberal) and Jean Carmignac (Catholic) all argued that the Gospel texts originate from just a few years of the events they record and were all complete before 70 AD. Today, more and more scholars will at least accept this as a possibility. **I believe the conclusion is correct.**

Key Events in the Chronology of Jesus' Ministry	Location	Timing	Matt	Mark	Luke	John
John the Baptist preaches and baptises	Bethabara	Mid 28AD to Early 29AD	✓	✓	✓	✓
Jesus' Baptism and Temptation	Bethabara/Judea wilderness	28/29AD	✓	✓	✓	
Jesus ministering under John	Bethabara	Mid 29AD				✓
Jesus gathers first followers	Bethabara, Perea	Mid-late 29AD				✓
Jesus travels up to Cana - Wedding miracle	Cana, Galilee	Late 29AD				✓
Jesus to Jerusalem for Passover/ First Temple cleansing	Jerusalem, Judea	Spring 30AD				✓
Jesus ministers in Samaria – 4 months to harvest	Sychar, Samaria	Early June 30AD				✓
Jesus arrives in Galilee	Cana, Gallilee	Late 30AD		✓	✓	✓
Ministry in Galilee and gathering disciples	Galilee, Capernaum based	Starts Late 30AD	✓	✓	✓	
Feast in Jerusalem (Passover), Healing lame man at Bethesda	Jerusalem, Bethesda	April 31AD				✓
Disciples pluck grain (2 nd first Sabbath)	Near Jerusalem	28 April 28 31AD	✓	✓	✓	
John the Baptist's delegation	Near Jerusalem	May 31AD	✓		✓	
Core team of 12 appointed	Round Lake Galilee/Genneserat	Spring-Summer 31AD	✓	✓	✓	
Sermon on Mount / Plain	Round Lake Galilee/Genneserat	Spring-Summer 31AD	✓	✓	✓	
Another tour around Galilee, Sending out the 12	Galilee, Capernaum based	Late 31AD – Early 32AD	✓	✓	✓	
John the Baptist beheaded	Machaerus, Jordan	~August 29 32AD	✓	✓		
Feeding 5000	Bethsaida	April 32AD	✓	✓	✓	✓
Withdrawal outside Galilee (Tyre and Sidon)	Phoenecia, Tyre, Sidon	Early Summer 32AD	✓	✓		
Feeding 4000	Lake Galilee/Genneserat	Early Summer 32AD	✓	✓		
Peter's confession of Faith	Caesaria Philippi	Summer 32AD	✓	✓	✓	
Transfiguration	Mount Hermon	Summer 32AD	✓	✓	✓	
Family challenge Jesus for not doing more at the Feasts	Capernaum	September 32AD				✓
Jesus leaves Galilee for Judea transiting via Samaria	Via Samaria	Early Oct 32AD	✓	✓	✓	✓
Jesus at Feast of Tabernacles	Jerusalem	10-17 October 32AD				✓
Ministry in Judea / Sending out the 70	Judea/Bethany	Late October 32AD	✓	✓	✓	
Feast of Dedication	Jerusalem	18 December 32AD				✓
Relocated beyond the Jordan	Perea	Late December 32AD	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lazarus is raised	Bethany	February 33AD				✓
Jesus moves to Ephraim (Samaria)	Samaria	February 33AD			✓	✓
Final Journey to Jerusalem	Via Galilee, Jericho	March 33AD	✓	✓	✓	✓