

## Fitting the Gospels together

Previously, in the notes for LMY 0.0 & 0.01, I introduced the table of the key events which I use to integrate the Gospels together in a consistent flow. This video explains how I arrived at this sequence.

### Introduction

Since the late 1980s there has been a growing acceptance that all four Gospels fit within the broad category of Ancient Biographical history. This is most true of the structure and styles of **Luke** and **John**, both were probably more consciously written as such. **Matthew's** Gospel is closer in styles to rhetorical biographies of teachers, in which events are presented as support to thematic collections of ideas and words. **Mark's** Gospel is best understood as a simple eye-witness account that reflects the historical-biography elements already embedded in **Matthew's** Gospel.

### Role and characteristics of each Gospel

#### **John's Gospel.**

The Muratorian Canon preserves an account of the writing of **John** from the second Century AD. It tells us that it is under Andrew's leadership that the proposal for a new-view Gospel was considered and then written by **John**. Andrew's leadership implies this is after Peter's execution in the early 60s, but the Gospel's reference to Jerusalem in the present tense tell us it was written before 70 AD.

**John's** Gospel has a clear logical and linear flow to it but, as it was written to supplement the synoptic accounts, it drops in and out of the story from a high level... Eg. **John 5** is set at 'The Feast', probably Passover or possibly 'Tabernacles' in 31 AD. Then **John 6** is set just before Passover a year later.

So **John's** Gospel puts the key markers in place, but doesn't help with the detail. The account of Jesus' ministry is deliberately Temple focused and it is punctuated with references to Festivals that can be easily identified. These references in **John** give us the broad sweep into which the various phases and some key events can be firmly fixed in time. The events of the synoptic Gospels must fit within this framework.

Like **Luke**, **John** employs the conventions of Ancient Biographical History much more deliberately. This is particularly important as the twelve Apostles don't exist to endorse the account as a group so **John's** Gospel clearly introduces his eye-witnesses and gives their credentials.

#### **Matthew's Gospel.**

This is the Apostolically Authorised Version of Jesus' ministry and teaching. Jesus' teaching shapes the telling and order of events, but there is still a basic flow of events. **Matthew** has arranged Jesus' teaching into 6 thematically themed sermons in five blocks separated by illustrative events.

1. <b>Intro, Birth &amp; Beginnings</b>	<b>Ch 1-4</b>
• <b>Discourse 1:</b> The Sermon on the Mount	<b>Ch 5-7</b>
2. <b>Growth</b>	<b>Ch 8-9</b>
• <b>Discourse 2:</b> : The Missionary Discourse	<b>Ch 10</b>
3. <b>Missionary Work Starts</b>	<b>Ch 11-12</b>
• <b>Discourse 3:</b> The Parables Discourse	<b>Ch 13</b>
4. <b>Multiplication</b>	<b>Ch 14-17</b>
• <b>Discourse 4:</b> Community Life Discourse	<b>Ch 18</b>
5. <b>Crescendo</b>	<b>Ch 19-23</b>
• <b>Discourse 4:</b> Apocalyptic Discourse	<b>Ch 24-25</b>
6. <b>Climax, Commission &amp; Conclusion</b>	<b>Ch 26-28</b>

**Matthew's** Gospel fits the genre of 'ancient biography' well. But, in common with the genre, he is not primarily concerned with chronology, rather he groups his material according to themes. He then sets these themes in a historical flow:

**Baptism → Galilee → Galilean plus → Judea → Crucifixion and Resurrection**

This historical flow is reflected by the other synoptic Gospels and we will need to fit this flow together with **John's** key markers.

However, **Matthew's** thematic approach and Aramaic way of writing creates a real mess if you try to put a detailed list of consecutive events out of his Gospel. Our English translations often reflect a flow of one event to another that is less clear cut in the Greek and in Aramaic/Hebrew would be non-existent. There are occasions where **Matthew** gives us chronologically useful information, such as 'At that time, Jesus went on the Sabbath day through the grain fields...' but his constant use of the word 'then' is not helpful since to the Hebrew mind 'then' doesn't imply temporal proximity, it is simply a narrative divider.

## Mark's Gospel.

In 42AD Peter has to leave Judea for 'another place', (**Acts 12:17**) Peter goes to Rome and **John Mark** goes with him! They take with them a scroll version of **Matthew's** written and authorised account of the apostles' teaching which Peter uses as a basis for his teaching but adding details and colour where he was a key player. In Rome, a Greek version of the Gospel is wanted, and people want it the way Peter told it. **Mark** provided it by capturing Peter's preaching. The early church tells us that **Mark** wrote to accurately capture the eyewitness details of Peter's preaching, but not to give an accurate chronology.

So we note that **Mark** broadly follows **Matthew's** historical flow, but amending it where Peter is a key player.

**Mark's** amendments with regards to Peter do improve on the flow of details from **Matthew** and where **Mark** does change the order of events found in **Matthew**, **Mark** is to be preferred.

## Luke's Gospel.

Lucius/**Luke** gets hold of John **Mark's** Gospel to go alongside **Matthew's** authorised version. Like John **Mark**, **Luke** was one of the 72, a follower of Jesus for at least his last year of ministry, and as such **Luke** had his own stories plus detailed knowledge of and access to others who were also witnesses.

He decides to research and construct a Gospel in a format that deliberately draws on the conventions of classical eye-witness historical biography. **Luke's** gospel is an ancient historical biography – like **John**. **Luke** even claims to have arranged things in order, and historically. His Gospel is the easiest to build a timeline around. However, in keeping with histories (both ancient and modern) his narrative 'cycles' forwards, it is not 100% linear.

At key transitions in the story, **Luke** will review backwards and summarise forwards in ways that to the modern reader can imply an event is in the wrong place.

**Luke** forms the backbone of our detailed chronology. **Luke** is writing with the benefit of distance from controversial events, so he can be more explicit about people and places that **Matthew** (copied by **Mark**) has had to obscure.

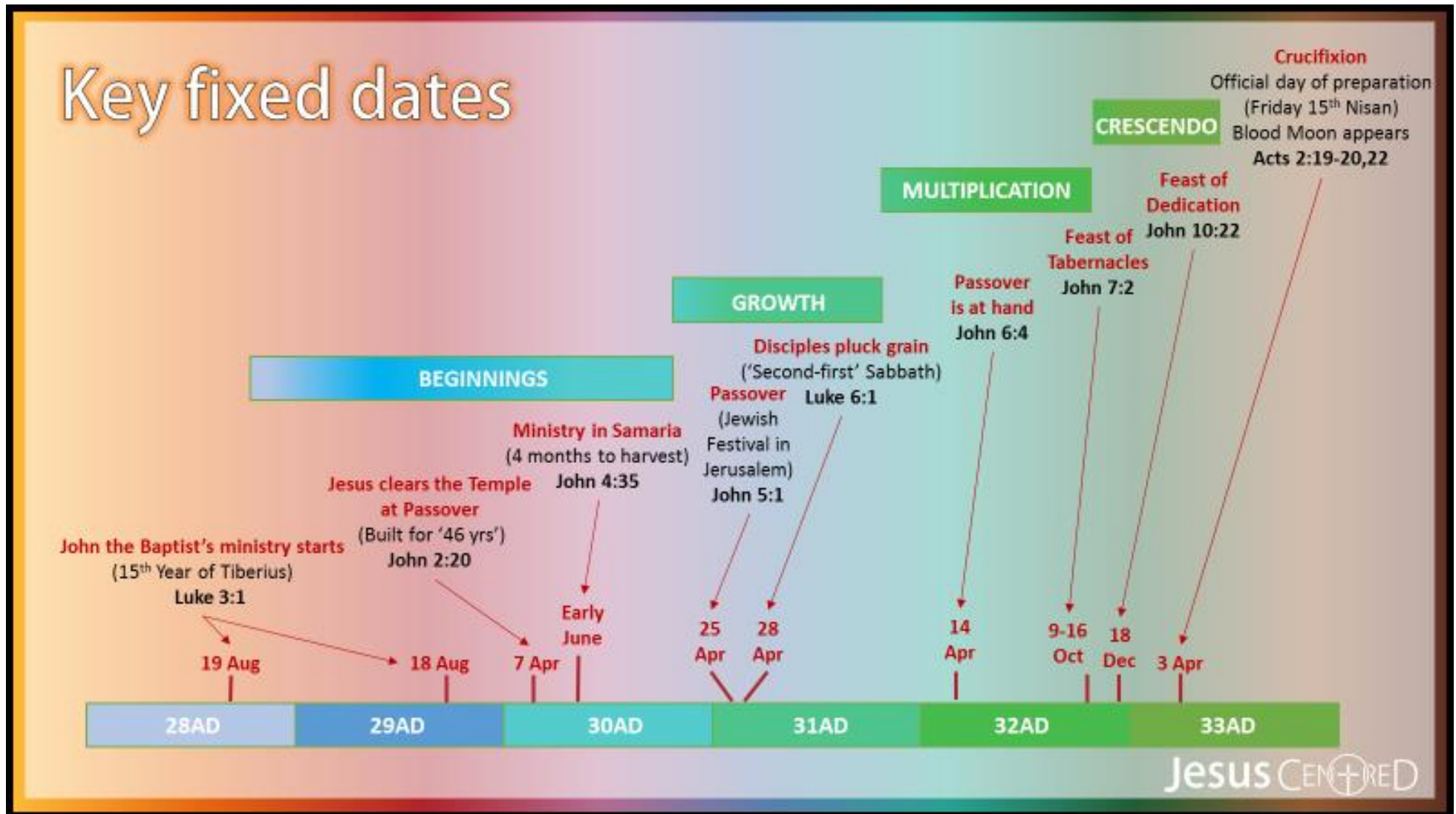
While Paul is under house arrest for two years, **Luke** collects extra stories from Jesus' brother James. He also tracks down those that witnessed the things he did not and at the same time collects other eye-witness accounts of the early days of the church. **Luke** compiles **Acts** as part of Paul's defence, in doing so he makes final editorial changes to his Gospel so that the two books work together as two volumes of one book. It was completed by 62 AD for Paul's defence.

While **Luke** provides the clearest flow of events in the synoptic Gospels, he still uses the narratives conventions of the ancient world often summarising then re-telling events from a period, which can seem to put an event in the wrong location. For instance, he narrates the sending and return of the 72, and then recounts incidents that probably happened during that missions and in **Luke 4:31-42** he summarises how Jesus moves to Capernaum and started touring Galilee from there. In **Luke 5** we read about the call of Peter, Andrew, James and John and other incidents that happen during the period already covered by the summary in the previous chapter.

### Building the basic framework with some Key Fixed Dates

- a. **Start with** the arrival of John the Baptist in the 15<sup>th</sup> Year of Tiberius (**Luke 3:1**)
- b. **End with** crucifixion at Passover 33 AD
  - a. Official Day of Preparation (15<sup>th</sup> Nisan) is a Friday in 33AD
  - b. Blood Moon appears 3 Apr 33 AD
- c. **Add in** some known key Feast dates from **John** and one from **Luke**.

This results in the framework overleaf.....



Distributing other events within this framework.

**First** consider key events in John's Gospel and how they fit with respect to those which also appear in the synoptics. (**Red: Both John and the synoptics**)

Event			
1	Jesus is with John the Baptist	9	Jesus mocked for not doing more at the feasts
2	Here He gathers some disciples	10	Jesus goes to the Feast of Tabernacles. Public miracles
3	They go to a Wedding in Cana	11	Relocates to Judea
4	Jesus clears the Temple at Passover time	12	Then the Feast of Dedication
5	Jesus ministers in Samaria	13	Relocates beyond the Jordan
6	Jesus comes to Galilee	14	Lazarus is raised
7	Feast in Jerusalem, plus healing at Bethesda	15	Jesus moves to Samaria
8	Feeding the 5000	16	Final Passover and Passion

**Next** consider events which appear in more than one Gospel. (**Green:** 2 Gospels, **Purple:** 3 Synoptic Gospels, **Red:** All 4 Gospels)

Event			
1	John the Baptist Preaches	9	Ministry outside Galilee
2	Baptism & Temptation	10	Feeding the 4000
3	Ministry in Galilee and Gathering Disciples. Sermon on Mount/Plane	11	Peter's confession of faith
4	Commissioning of the 12	12	The Transfiguration
5	Communication with John the Baptist (Jerusalem)	13	Jesus Leaves Galilee for Judea
6	Another tour around Galilee, sending out the 12	14	Ministry in Judea
7	John the Baptist is beheaded	15	The Journey to Jerusalem
8	Feeding the 5000	16	Cleansing of the Temple
		17	The Crucifixion and Resurrection

## Putting it all together

- Jesus is baptised 29 AD
- He clears the Temple in 30 AD
- Ministers in a low key way based in Judea and Samaria through 30 AD
- In 31 AD Jesus is back based in Galilee. After John the Baptist's arrest he draws together the disciples he met in the South, but who live in the North and starts a bigger more public ministry based in Capernaum.
- Passover 32 AD is a turning point (although Jesus misses the feast) with Peter's confession of faith and the transfiguration. By the Feast of Tabernacles Jesus has relocated to Judea/Perea.
- Jesus' ministry is now predominantly outside of Galilee. He is using his team of 72. Women are now acknowledged as disciples.
- Lazarus is raised from the dead at the start of 33 AD (after the Feast of Dedication) - prompting a plan to kill Jesus
- Jesus relocates to Ephraim in Samaria
- Jesus starts his final journey to Jerusalem from the border between Samaria and Galilee around the start of March
- Jesus arrives at Bethany on 28<sup>th</sup> March
- Jesus is crucified on 3<sup>rd</sup> April
- Rises on 5<sup>th</sup> April and ascends on May 14<sup>th</sup> 33 AD

