Summary of the Gospels themes, Intro. to Acts

Now the material in Acts is not included in the first exam. It will appear on the second exam sometime later. So the material that I'm going to talk about, the Gospels, including the Gospels today is fair game for the exam but the Acts material isn't. But it would be a good idea if we finished the Gospels early enough we can at least get started on Acts, then I planning on stopping about around a quarter till, and devoting the rest of the time to a review session. I'll talk more about the exam. I'll tell you what it's going to look like and how to study for it and I will open it up for questions so the length of the review session will depend on you. If you want to get out and enjoy the weather everyone can just be quiet, then I'll know that you don't want to talk about the exam, you can go outside and we can end early. But I do want to make the time available for you to ask any questions as far as what we talked about or what to expect on the exam. Review gaps in your notes or something you didn't understand or want to ask about. I'll give you an opportunity to do that. So that'll be the last ten minutes or so of class. Again I mainly want open up the question so it's kind of up to you as to how long we go, so that's kind of what is on tap for today. Let’s open with prayer and then I want to wrap up our discussion of the Gospels and just get started on the book of Acts.

Father, I thank you for the beautiful day in the warmer weather and pray we’ll find opportunities to get outside and enjoy it while it's here. Father, I pray now that you help us to focus on just a very small portion of the New Testament, in your overall revelation to us in the Old Testament. I pray that we'll be challenged and encouraged to read the Gospels in a new light and to understand the perspective and the various portraits that they paint of Jesus and what it means to know him and respond in obedience. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

We have been looking at the Gospels primarily from the standpoint, not so much to just grasp their content, hopefully you've picked that up in the reading, I've tried to
emphasize what seems to be the distinct emphasis of each of the Gospels. I'm assuming that there is a distinction, because, as we'll see in the moment, the church has allowed four Gospels to stand in the New Testament instead of just one or instead of just combining them all together into one large gospel or life of Christ, the church has allowed four Gospels to stand as they are in our canonical Scriptures. So what I've tried to do, as we move through the New Testament, through the Gospels, I simply try to give you a kind of a taste for what is unique about each of the Gospels. What do they have the others don't go or what they emphasize to the extent the others don't or at least what seems to be the main themes or main emphases of any of the Gospels as compared to another one.

So that today you try to you get a picture of what is the distinct way that each of the gospel writers and I would argue, in a complementary way, not contradictory, but it in a complementary way. What is the unique perspective that each of the authors convey about the person of Jesus Christ. Now when I was in college the first Gospels type class I had was a class called “The Life of Christ” it was actually been very traditional in university and in college, especially Bible college and in Christian liberal arts college settings, to have a course on The Life of Christ where basically what you do is drawing on all four Gospels, You put them together into a rather coherent description of who Christ was and what he did. It usually results in somewhat of a specific timeline in which things happened and you end up with a grand narrative or picture of who Jesus was and what he did and what he taught. That is fine and that is necessary to some degree, to be able to harmonize the Gospels, to come up with a portrait of who Christ was. But again if we are to follow the lead of the New Testament, it's interesting that as I said, the New Testament did not do that. The New Testament left us with four separate accounts of the life of Christ. So one of the dangers of putting them together into a grand life of Christ or to teach a class on The Life of Christ of the teachings of Christ as helpful necessary as that is, one of the dangers is we may risk blunting the unique individual voices of the four Gospels. So that perhaps before we ever bring all the Gospels together into a grand life of Christ or teaching of Christ, it's necessary to get a sense of what is the unique voice or the unique perspective
on Jesus that each of the Gospels provides. What we started doing in this class is, instead of just giving you a life of Christ, we focus on what are the unique themes and perspectives of the four Gospels.

Again, in church history there was an individual in the second century named Tatian, and we talked about this before, Tatian attempted to write a work called the "Diatessaron." Again you don't need to know that for a test or anything or what the "Diatessaron" was. It was simply the name of this book that he wrote and it was an attempt to combine all four gospels into one. He started with John's Gospel, which is kind of interesting as we've said, even some scholars think Matthew, Mark and Luke are fairly reliable, they question John because as we said, one of the ways John has been characterized as one of the more theological and one of the more spiritual Gospels. So a lot of scholars today would not rely on John for historical information about Jesus. They think it's more theological and reflects the teaching of the early church etc. But Tatian started with John and wove all four Gospels into one grand narrative of the life of Christ. But interestingly that never caught on. The church never adopted Tatian's approach, instead, they allow for Gospels to stand and their distinct and unique contributions to a full and complex understanding of who Jesus was.

So, for example, when we look at Matthew's Gospel, we found that at Matthew, this portrays Jesus in a number of ways such as the new Moses: the one who, like Moses, now comes to rescue his people. Jesus is portrayed as a teacher. Jesus is portrayed as the son of God. He's portrayed as the ancestor of David, the descendent of David, who has the right to sit on David's throne and rule as king, but not only for Jews but for Gentiles as well. There's a distinct emphasis in Matthew's Gospel on the inclusion of Gentiles. Jesus is portrayed as the one who is the climax and the fulfillment of the entirety of Old Testament Scripture. Mark portrays Jesus in a balance between his humanity and his deity. He portrays Jesus as the suffering servant who comes to suffer and die on behalf of his people. Luke portrays Jesus as the Savior. That's one of the characteristic terms for Luke to describe Jesus as Savior. He points out what Jesus does to save his people or bring salvation. Luke also
portrays Jesus as the son of David like Matthew does in fulfillment of the Old Testament. Jesus is also portrayed in Luke as one having compassion for the outcasts of society. Those who are the undesirables or untouchables that everyone else rejects, Jesus accepts. John then comes along and portrays Jesus in a number of ways. John is the only Gospels to portray Jesus as the Passover lamb. He is the lamb of God in fulfillment of the Old Testament Passover Lamb--now Jesus fulfills that. Jesus is the word, the Logos, the very revelation of God. Jesus is portrayed clearly, although I think all four Gospels do this, but John specifically and overtly portrays Jesus as the son of God and as God himself not to without denying his humanity. Jesus is clearly portrayed as a divine figure, as God himself.

So you can see that the Gospels have unique ways of presenting Jesus and portraying him that we would be impoverished if we lack any of the four. You see why the church left those four alone. We would be a slightly impoverished and our understanding of Jesus would be lacking if we did not have these four different perspectives and the different emphases on who Jesus was. Again, this reminder before we're too quick to combine all the Gospels together into a life of Christ, their distinct voices need to be heard as far as what they're trying to say uniquely about Jesus, who he is, what he does and what he says. However, when we do combine the Gospels and put them together when you look at the four together, what are some of the unique features that seemed to emerge from all four? If I were to paint a portrait of Jesus, what might I emphasize that seems to emerge from the Gospels? There are lot of things. We could put all this together in one grand picture. But is there anything that emerges in and I'm especially thinking of things that we might be tempted to overlook. Are there themes that the Gospel writers emerge that we might overlook?

Now one of the themes obviously emerges in the couple of them is Jesus's deity but most of us, I don't think, would question that. I think most of us have a little bit more difficulty envisioning Jesus humanity. So that's a starting point. If I were to paint a portrait of Jesus, the first thing I would emphasize is Jesus’ humanity and that is avoiding a Docetic Jesus. Now what the word Docetic is, this word actually comes from a Greek word: dokeo
which means “to seem” or “to think.” This word Docetic was used to describe a very early heresy or false teaching in regarding Christ that actually denied Jesus of his full humanity. It said that Jesus only appeared to be human, hence the word “Docetic.” Again the Greek word means “to seem” and Docetism or the Docetic view of Jesus means Jesus only appeared or seemed to be a human being. So very early on, this is very interesting, a lot of the early church fathers, when they started to think about Jesus and formulate what they thought, very few people denied Jesus’ deity. Most of them would've denied his humanity, such as Gnostic type thinking, Platonic type thinking which emphasizes the spiritual over the physical. But, again, Docetism was the name of an early heresy that said Jesus only seemed or appeared to be human but he really wasn't. So it agreed that Jesus was deity and was God but it denied his humanity.

But it's in the Gospels we find the full humanity of Jesus disclosed. Again, you don't have to read very far into Luke chapter 1, 2 and 3 to read and see Jesus and confront him in his full humanity. Luke, as we said, is the only writer that says anything about Jesus's childhood. He adds an interesting phrase in there; “Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and human beings.” How can Luke say that about Jesus, if Jesus is God? How does he need to grow? Yet Luke reminds us and discloses Jesus in his full humanity that Jesus did have to grow in wisdom and understanding. On the one hand, Jesus is the omniscient, God knows all things; yet at the same time he's an ignorant human being that doesn't know everything. So he has to grow in wisdom and stature and favor with God and human beings.” Later on there are times in the Gospels, there's one interesting phrase, especially I think Matthew, Mark, Luke have where Jesus says not even the Son of Man, not even I know the hour when the Son of Man will return. In reference to the “not yet” the time when Jesus would return to set up his kingdom. Jesus says, “I don't even know what time” only the Father knows the hour, and the day, that will take place. But we saw that the Gospel Mark portrays Jesus as suffering on behalf of his people and dying. There's another interesting thing in Luke, towards the very end of the gospel, in the garden of Gethsemane. Remember right before Jesus is arrested, you find the Gospels portraying Jesus as praying
with his disciples in the garden. Not garden of Eden, the Garden of Gethsemane, outside Jerusalem. While he's praying, it's not long after that when the guards come arrest Jesus, take him off to his trial and dies. In the garden, he's portrayed as praying. Interestingly, Luke portrays Jesus as praying, something like this, he says, “Father, please let this cup pass from me” and what that means is that, is the cup is a metaphor for Jesus suffering and death that he's about to undertake. So, interestingly, Jesus seems to be saying, “Father, if there's any other way this can be done, except through my death, you have my vote.” In other words, Jesus is responding with horror as he faces what's going to come--his death. It's a very human reaction. Yet of course Jesus's next words are “yet not my will, that is what I would like to happen, but your will be done, Father.” And then Jesus goes off to the cross. But in that moment, Luke portrays Jesus undergoing a very human response and emotion in the face of death.

So the Gospels portrayed Jesus in his own humanity they and don't shrink back from Jesus’ deity either. Yet they don't diminish his humanity and portray him in fully human terms. Later on, in the book of Hebrews that we'll talk about later on in the semester, the author, probably reflecting on the Gospels says the reason Jesus can function as our high Priest is because he's been tempted in every way we have, yet he has not sinned. In other words, the requirement for a high priest was the ability to understand and sympathize with the people he represented and Jesus could not be our high priest if he were only God. He can only be our high priest because he's God yet at the same time he is fully human. He's experienced the full range of human temptation. For example, was Jesus tempted sexually? He probably was, yet he never crossed the line in thought or action between being tempted and actually sinning. So Jesus would've experienced the full range of human temptation. So the entire New Testament, especially the Gospels, don't shrink back from portraying Jesus in his full humanity as a human being, while at the same time, as still portraying him as the son of God in his full deity.

So again, today where we're more prone to emphasize Jesus deity because that is probably the aspect of Jesus that many people would tend to reject and see him as just a
human being. But in the first century, it probably would've been the opposite. It would have been more of a tendency to deny Jesus’ humanity, hence the biblical authors stress Jesus’ humanity, his full humanity, along with his deity as well. So the first part of the portrait of Jesus would be his humanity avoiding a Docetic Jesus.

Before we go on, another example I’d like to use, just to show how even Docetism has unwittingly crept into some of our language and even some of the songs we sing in church settings. I always cringe when I sing this at Christmas time, “Away in the Manger,” that part “no crying he makes.” Who said Jesus didn't cry? He was a human being like any other human baby, he would have cried. That's a very Docetic view of Jesus that he would not have cried. Our pictures of Jesus where he's glowing and has a halo over his head, that certainly captures the significance of Jesus birth but it tends to obscure the fact he was just a normal human being and it would have been just normal, a very humbling human birth that Jesus experienced. So we want to avoid a Docetic Jesus.

The second aspect of the portrait of Jesus, I might emphasize, is Jesus’ compassion for outcasts. Avoiding a popular Jesus. That is as we saw especially with Luke but the other Gospels give hints of as well. Jesus is not one to carry favor with the religious establishment and elite. Jesus is not one to simply follow the lead of the populace. But Jesus was willing to boldly cross the line socially and economically and reach out and have physical contact with and relationships with those that were socially outcast, those on the fringes of society. Jesus demonstrated over and over his compassion, especially for the outcasts of society, when that is not popular in the religious elite and establishment they would have nothing to do with that. We saw with Luke, that's what often got Jesus in trouble. Particularly when it brought him into conflict with the Old Testament law. He certainly was not supposed to associate with these people that disregarded the law of Moses or to touch them physically or to get too close to them would bring about some kind of a ceremonial violation. But Jesus was quite willing to do that. So avoiding a popular Jesus, emphasizing the Jesus that reaches out to, not the religious and social elite and popular, but to those who are the outcast and the undesirables.
A third emphasis I would paint is Jesus's concern for stewardship, avoiding a wealthy Jesus. Again there's nothing, especially in Luke, but there's nothing in the Gospels that suggest Jesus said that wealth was sinful or wrong. But certainly in the Gospels Jesus reminds us of the danger of placing our trust in material possessions and wealth in the way that eclipses or obscures or takes away true trust in the person of Jesus Christ. What Jesus is really against is the hoarding of wealth, the trust of wealth. That's why Jesus says things in the Sermon on the Mount “don't store up treasure on earth where moths and rust corrode.” He's not saying money is wrong, the only problem is it's temporary. It can be destroyed. The only proper object of your trust is in the person of Jesus Christ. So Jesus reminds us that wealth is a very crummy object for your trust and rely and to hoard wealth or to place our trust in it in exchange for trust in Jesus Christ is simply to miss what Jesus is doing. I wonder especially in our North American context if we don't need to hear this message again. A lot of Christians need to go back and hear Jesus and what he says about our attitude towards wealth and material possessions.

Finally, a concern for community. We saw in all the Gospels that Jesus gathers around himself a community of disciples and that's not because Jesus was into the small groups and things like that. What Jesus is doing is preparing a nucleus that will result in the community that revolves around obedience and worship to Jesus Christ and the community that will continue to spread and expand and eventually embrace the entire earth. So, Jesus, in all his Gospels, makes provision for a community of followers that will carry on the work that Jesus begun to do and a community that will identify itself by obedience to the person of Jesus Christ. So, avoiding an individualistic Jesus, by the way, we noted too, the reason Jesus chose a smaller group of disciples and the reason he chose 12 of them. For what reason? Why the Jesus chose 12 disciples? Why not eight? Eight would've been nice small group or maybe 15 would've been a little better? But it was for 12 tribes of Israel. In other words, this is the new people of God, the new Israel founded on Jesus Christ, and his apostles, not on the 12 tribes of Israel and the law. So now what Jesus is doing, by choosing 12 apostles, is forming a new people; a new community that will be
marked out by faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to him and will continue the work that Jesus himself began. Again, at least in the Gospels and I think I could demonstrate in the rest of the New Testament, that the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament knows of no such thing as a Christian who is outside of community or an individualistic Christian who thinks that they can make a go of it on their own. It didn't exist. It was unthinkable that you would be one of Jesus followers, a Christian and not belong to a community that is the Jesus Church, the people of God. So once again, in our society where we tend to value individualism and are our aspirations is perhaps again we need to hear Jesus's message that is countercultural at times, reminding us of how much we need the community of God's people and how much God's intention is that we don't live lives as individual Christians but that we live lives in a community. This new people of God that Jesus is establishing revolves around response to him in faith.

But remember what we said in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament most Jews would have defined the people of God, according to what would have been the distinct marker or markers that you belong to the people of God, to the community of God's people. What would be the identity markers showed that you truly belong to this community, the Old Testament people of God? What would they have focused on? How did they worship? What was special? What did that look like under the Old Testament? [student speaks] Temple sacrifices, obedience to the law, so that that would've been the primary marker that you obey the Mosaic law by offering a temple sacrifices. Even further than that, ethnically that you were a Jew. Again one of the big issues in New Testament is: who are the true children of Abraham? Are they those who are physically descended from Abraham or can Gentiles be sons of Abraham as well. Again, that's where Jesus comes in and he redefines the community of God's people: the Church. By the way, the word “church” that we kind of made a technical term out of that, but the word "church," the Greek word was actually used in the Greek Old Testament to refer to the nation of Israel, the assembly of God's people. So by using the word "church" Matthew and Paul are that they're not using a new term, they're using the term that they borrowed from the Old
Testament refer to Israel. What Jesus is doing is now the true church, the true assembly, the true people of God. It is no longer focused on obedience of the law and Temple sacrifices and being ethnically a Jew but now it is determined solely by one's response to Jesus Christ and that's why Gentiles can be included as well. If the determining factor is not obedience to the law and becoming a Jew ethnically, then Gentiles can equally become God's people on the same basis that Israel does by simply responding in faith and obedience to Jesus Christ. So, concern for community and the Gospels avoiding an individualistic Jesus, again, Jesus in all the Gospels makes preparation for a group of followers that in a community will in the sense become his representatives and continue his mission and who will respond in faith and obedience to Jesus Christ.

But there's probably other of things that you can think of. One person in one of my classes a couple years ago suggested that a concern for grace avoiding a legalistic Jesus. That is Jesus didn't just come to teach a new law, while he did come to demand of his followers, he also provided the means of fulfilling his demands. Jesus is portrayed as graciously entering into a relationship and graciously providing what he requires of his people. Remember the Sermon the Mount those that are poor in spirit will recognize the bankruptcy, who hunger and thirst after righteousness, they will be filled. God will fill them with that righteous. So that could be a fifth one: the concern or emphasis on God's grace avoiding the legalistic Jesus. Jesus just didn't come to give a new law or a means of earning one's way to salvation but graciously offered salvation and graciously made provision for his people to follow him in obedience. Any questions about any of these? [student asks question] That was Matthew chapter 5 and I think verse 12 in the Beatitudes.

Let me just introduce you to the next book and now we essentially moved to a new section of the New Testament which in a sense, stands on its own it. It's a lot like the Gospels and that it's narrative but it's unlike the Gospels in that it doesn't focus on any one person, it focuses on the number of persons. It's not focused on the exploits of one person in a limited geographical location but it's geographical distribution is much more broad. It eventually encompasses the entire Greco-Roman world so Acts is a little bit different in
that regard. But the story of the early church, the book of Acts, the first question asked is: what is Acts doing here? We understand its location in the New Testament and we talked about the fact before that the New Testament is not arranged according to chronology but it's more logical and thematic. So the book of Acts actually has a very natural location in the New Testament. It naturally follows the Gospels and it naturally and logically prepares for the epistles, the rest of the New Testament especially Paul's epistles. The reason why is the book of Acts naturally follows the Gospels because they record what Jesus began to do in the Gospels, now that work continues through his followers in Acts. We talked a moment ago about Jesus gathering a group of disciples that would form the nucleus for this transcultural people of God we call the church. So the Gospels prepare for that, but what Acts does is show how the work of Jesus begun on earth now gets to continue through this group of followers that now, in Jesus absence, after his death and resurrection and ascension to heaven, it shows what began with Jesus now gets continued through his followers--his disciples.

Then Acts provides a bridge to the rest of the New Testament because some of these followers become main characters. Acts does not center around one main figure Jesus Christ, it centered around a number of figures but the letters and the rest of the New Testament are letters that come from the pen of some of these key figures. So we have the letters from 1st and 2nd Peter. We have letters from John. Interestingly the dominant character in the book of Acts, the person that a lot of times, especially in the second half of the book takes center stage, is an individual named the apostle Paul. So it's natural then that right after Acts the largest group of writings of the rest the New Testament come from Paul's pen because he's one of the dominant figures in the book of Acts. Again Acts provides a perfect bridge between the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament in picking up where the Gospels left off, in showing how Jesus’ ministry gets continued by his followers but then providing a bridge to the rest the New Testament by introducing those persons that end up being the authors of many of the letters that form the rest the New Testament.
What is Act’s relationship to Luke? We've already talked about that when we discussed Luke. Acts was the second part of a two volume work: Luke/Acts. But again for the reasons we just described, when the New Testament was formed into canon the books of Luke and Acts were split apart. Luke went with the other books that resembled the Gospels Matthew, Mark and John and then Acts was separate because it provided a handy transition between the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament. Acts actually has a fairly easy, plan, as far as the way it develops. There may be several ways to outline or break up the book of Acts. The easy way that seems to be in line with what the author intends, is found in the very first chapter and verse eight. Jesus at the very end of Luke Jesus dies, he's raised from the dead, he appears to his followers. In Acts chapter 1 Jesus has not yet ascended to heaven, he's still instructing his disciples at the very beginning of Acts. Acts and Luke, as I said, were originally a 2 volume work.

So with the book of Acts Jesus is still on earth, instructing his disciples and it won't be too long when he will ascend into heaven and then it will be up to his followers to continue the work that Jesus had begun. But part of Jesus's instructions to his followers, his disciples before he departs, is found in Acts chapter 1 verse 8 and in a sense this verse provides kind of summary form, an outline of where the book of Acts is headed. So Jesus tells his disciples “and you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Before we look at how that fits, the most important thing to realize is this is not just a nice missionary strategy. If you notice it moves in concentric circles: starting Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria which is just to the north, and then the end ends of the earth, the uttermost parts of the earth. You know this isn't just Jesus being a good missionary strategist that you need to start with your home-base then move out, while that may be true. But what you need to know about this verse is, I think the reason that it is put here, is because it is a direct reflection of the prophet Isaiah's program for how God and restore his people. Interestingly if you go back to the book of Isaiah it envisions the good news in spreading from Jerusalem and ending up at the ends of the earth. So this isn't just Jesus
again saying, “have I got a strategy for spreading the gospel,” but instead what Jesus is doing is saying, “with you spreading the gospel, Isaiah's promise of fulfillment or Isaiah's promise of restoration in salvation is now beginning to be fulfilled.” So Acts reaches all the way back to the Old Testament to show that Jesus, and now his followers, are fulfilling all these Old Testament prophecies and promises and expectations.

So, for example, if you look in your notes, mine's on page 23 at the very top, I've isolated those phrases in Acts 1:8 “so when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, then you will be my witnesses until the ends of the earth.” Those phrases come right out of the book of Isaiah. For example, this is in chapter 32 and verse 15 where Acts says, “when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.” Again chapter 32 is referring to a day when God returns and restores his people, and brings them back to Jerusalem. They're in exile now, but he brings them back to Jerusalem. Now verse 15 says, “until the spirit from on high is poured out on us and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field and the fruitful field is deemed a forest.” And notice that phrase from Isaiah 32:15 “until the spirit from on high is poured out upon us.” Now Luke says “when the Holy Spirit comes upon them.” Notice on the next page, “you will be my witnesses” again in Isaiah chapter 43, this is Isaiah the prophet talking about a day when God will return and restore his people. Chapter 43 and 10 and 12 listen to this; “you are my witnesses.” He's speaking to Israel “you are my witnesses, says the Lord and my servant whom I have chosen.” Verse 12 is, “I declared and saved and proclaimed when there was no strange God among you and you are my witnesses, says the Lord.” Again God is addressing Israel and now Jesus addresses this new Israel, this new people of God, starting with his disciples and tells them that you are my witnesses in fulfillment of the book of Isaiah. Isaiah's promise of restoration, a day when God and restore his people and bring in a new creation and bring them salvation through a Messiah. Acts saying that it is now taking place but not in the physical nation of Israel but in this new people that Jesus has now established. So the Holy Spirit will come upon them in fulfillment of Isaiah 32, they will be his witnesses in fulfillment of Isaiah 43, and then one more; notice the order in Acts is even the same order throughout the book of Isaiah. When
Jesus tells the disciples “you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth” Isaiah chapter 49 and verse 6 says, “Listen to this, again this is God speaking to Isaiah the prophet to Israel as they're in exile, he promises the one day they will return from exile and God will restore them as his people and bring them salvation. And here's what he says, “it is too light thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the survivors of Israel. I will give you as a light to the nations.” So Israel's to be a light to the nations.” So that my celebration may reach to the ends of the earth.” That's the exact same phrasing find in Acts chapter 1 verse 8.

So what is Jesus doing? He is basically telling his disciples they are to fulfill the program of restoration that was anticipated and prophesied in the book of Isaiah. The Holy Spirit was to be poured out onto Israel, they were to be his people, they were to be his witnesses, they were to spread salvation to the ends of the earth. Now it's as if Jesus is saying, now that mantle gets passed on to Jesus’ disciples, to this new Israel, this new church, this new community of God's people that is a nucleus from the disciples. That's exactly what's going to take place in the rest of the book of Acts. So, again, it's so crucial that we learn to read the New Testament with one ear tuned into the Old Testament. Again this isn't just a nice missionary strategy that Jesus thought up with that he thought would work. He's showing that what's going on in Acts 2 is nothing less than the fulfillment of what Isaiah promised back in the Old Testament and now that's taking place, not in the nation of Israel, but now in this new community, this new assembly, this new people of God that now revolves and centers around Jesus.

Alright, I think we'll stop there and next week we'll continue talking about Acts. But let's talk a little bit about the exam. I'll say a couple things. I just want to talk a little bit about what it's going to look like and then say something about how to study for it and then give you a chance to ask questions.

The exam is all multiple-choice. I know, I hate multiple-choice exams but with a class this big if I gave you an essay test I would be up until next Christmas trying to grade them. So a class this size unfortunately constrains me to some degree to give out all
multiple-choice type test. So that’s the nature of the test. Everyone should be able to finish it within the hour. Some of you may be done in 20 minutes, some may take a whole section, that's fine. Whatever you need to do. Again the exam will cover only the background and the gospel materials. Everything I said about Acts today will not be in the exam and you're not responsible for that information. It will appear on the next exam. So all the background material from day one, all the way through the Gospels, that is the information that will be in the exam. One of the things that I try to do it on the exam is I try to get you to compare and contrast the Gospels. I'll ask you questions that attempting to get you to compare and contrast the Gospels as far what's unique about each. I might ask you which gospel portrays Jesus as the new Moses and hopefully you would answer is Matthew and so you get that right. So, things like that, I am simply trying to get you to compare. There's a lot of questions related to the main emphases and themes throughout the gospel. Again I don't ask you for specific verses or anything like that. I am more interested in focusing on the Gospels as a whole. You do need to be aware of the main emphases, the main themes and the main texts. Whenever we talked about certain passages in relationship to the Gospels. In John we touched on a number passages like the Farewell Discourse or the Woman at the Well and just know the content of those passages and anything we said about those passages. We talked a little bit about the endings of Mark. Did Mark end at verse eight or did it have a longer ending on it? So anytime we talked about any of the distinct passages, just be able to tell me what that content in those passages.

One thing you might do, I had someone do this, one year they put together a chart and on a big poster board, down one side of the chart, on the left hand column they had the four Gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and then had a series of columns going over the cross. One column said author, one said structure, one said passages, main passages, another column said main portrait of Jesus and another one said main emphases, and for each gospel she summarized in each of those squares, took information out of your notes and put squares and at one glance she could look at all four Gospels and compare and
contrast how they differ. She did that for every exam. So you might think of doing that, getting the information out of the notes and constructing some kind of chart where you can see visually all the Gospels at once and see how they compare and contrast, what themes they emphasize and things like that. Again with the section on history, be aware of the main persons, the main events politically, religiously, some of the main cultural trends. We talked about two or three of them. Now I have on Blackboard the study guide for exam number one so if you go to the same place where the syllabus is, in the notes for this class, on content, if you go there, you will find a study guide for exam number one and I think I touched on everything. If you can answer all those, everyone should get a 100 if you can answer all those questions considered again that the exam is not from your textbook reading. It solely reflects our classroom discussion and in the notes that you take. Again there's a study guide. You might want to look at that and if you have other questions to me, please feel free to e-mail me if you have questions about something on the exam or something in the study guide. But any questions about the exam generally or any specific things in your notes anything related to the background or Gospels that you wonder about don't hesitate to ask. [student speaks] There are a number of key themes that weren't necessarily focused only on who Jesus was. I think in most of the Gospels we talked about main emphases, that is how Jesus was portrayed, but another unique or key themes of the Gospels. [student speaks] know persons, events, and religious movements. Remember we talked about both Greco-Roman and Jewish religious movements? Like the Jewish movements, the Essenes, the Pharisees, be able to tell me what they thought, what they emphasize and how they responded, especially to Roman rule. We talked a little bit about the Qumran community and the Dead Sea Scrolls. We talked a little bit about Canon and what was the criteria for a book to be considered to get into the New Testament canon--those kinds of things.

Again that's all spelled out on Blackboard, on the study guide. I encourage you to download the study guide. [student speaks] I will not ask about dates because I couldn't be very precise myself right now. I'm not going to ask for any specific dates. I guess I could
but that doesn't, at least for me, those are the kind of things I forget first. I'd rather you get to the main meaning and idea behind those events. As a sense that this happened before Christ during his birth or something like that. That's the main thing. There are a few dates you will be required to know later on. Though, it's not as if I'll never ask about dates that for this purpose of this exam. [student speaks] Dates of the Gospels, I think I asked you that question on some of your quizzes because it is in your textbook, but I'm not going to ask you about these specific dates. You probably need to know the order in which most scholars think they were written but I won't ask you to actually know the dates. Some persons are hesitant to give a precise date. Sometimes they give about a 10 year, 60-70 A.D. or 70-80 AD. I won't ask any specific dates as long as you know that everything happened in the first century that’s probably close enough. [student speaks] The reading for next week and you can do that for Wednesday. So the textbook reading is, that's fine, you can do that by Wednesday.

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