

Waving Palm Branches: The Markan Triumphal Entry
In Light of Historical Criteria

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Waving Palm Branches:

The crowd was excited. The great week of the Feast was here. Quite expectantly, Jerusalem would swell up to perhaps twice its normal population. In anticipation and in the face of religious zealots and past history, Pilate would again shore up his troops and travel from his spacious and oceanic residence, Caesarea, enroute to Jerusalem. Among those who held more pious expectations, there would be thousands of Jews who would come to commemorate and celebrate the God of the covenant. Then, perhaps quite suddenly, like an immense wave that unexpectedly crashes down, the crowd of gatherers from the eastern corner of Jerusalem were caught up in a commotion. Someone in the distance shouted: ‘Jesus of Nazareth, he has come!’ And so he came, but in a manner that might have appeared rather unusual, on a donkey with mother beside, with traditional psalms being sung, but all seemingly directed to this prophet of Nazareth. The crowd in that particular area rushed out to meet him, excited, and those with him from Galilee followed with further shouts of praise and worship. Palm branches, a fitting symbol for Israel, were grabbed by many in the crowd as they rushed out to meet Jesus. Others grabbed what they could and placed it under him, whether it be vegetation from the sides of the road leading from Bethany to Jerusalem, or the placing of robes under his feet. United by the fact they were both onlookers, but belonging to entirely separate worlds, both Pilate’s soldiers and impervious Jews must have been thinking some important questions, given the tense political climate of that week: what did these worshippers think of this supposed prophet? And, even more importantly, what did the singing crowds with palm branches hope to see on that day?

That is the crucial question, not only for their time, but for ours as well. Each person, in fact, must face the person, Jesus of Nazareth, and make a response. The question, ‘Who is this Jesus of Nazareth?’ has echoed from those historical Jerusalem walls down to us today, and binds us together with them, as we are confronted with this ancient Jewish man riding into Jerusalem on an unbroken donkey. But more than a mere Passover pilgrim, the Evangelists present him as one who is both king and suffering servant. What will we do then with this portrait? All too often, unfortunately, critical scholars are all too quick to follow the well-worn trail that reduces the Gospel accounts to creative re-workings and reconstructions of the early church. Thus, the essential Jesus, the Jesus as he appeared in Galilee and Judea two millennia ago, is seemingly silenced behind a golden curtain of propaganda and ignorance.

In light of this persistent skepticism, we would do well to trace key issues in the current Jesus quest alongside current issues in historical criticism. After evaluating several current criteria utilized in accessing the historical Jesus, we will understand that, not only is the Markan triumphal account entirely authentic, but that it demands a deliberate response toward this king and suffering servant. For now the obvious and perhaps tendentious question that must be asked is this: Why investigate the life and mission of Jesus of Nazareth?

The Importance of Jesus research

“Who is Jesus? The eschatological prophet? The divine logos? The Son of God? The suffering servant? The crucified messiah? Or, moving to more recent designations, is he a peasant sage? A spirit-person? Wisdom incarnate? If the third quest has proved anything it is that the historical Jesus remains remarkably elusive...Certainly some formulations are better than others. All probably can be pushed too far and used coercively. But all make a point. And in so doing, they remind us that Jesus transcends our labels- all of them. Intriguingly, the many-faceted Jesus of the third quest tends to suggest a transcendence that many participants in that quest want to deny. And it is precisely that transcendent Jesus that the biblical and ecclesiastical designations have sought to describe. Paul finally says it best: ‘For all the promises of God find their Yes in him’ (2 Cor 1:20 RSV). No trajectory, no tradition, no title, no description will capture Jesus- the ‘historical’ Jesus one or the biblical one. All the promises and all the titles that go with them will be just enough.”¹

Seldom do people engage themselves in a prolonged and intensive search for matters which are ultimately decisive and crucial. For the most part, a considerable amount of people in America go about their daily tasks with relative serenity. Daily responsibilities demand numerous hours of concentration, such as providing for one’s family, promoting business, office or private ventures, and pursuing personal advancements. When the sun sets and most of us trek back to our homes, the beckoning carrot of promise is found in an evening of media saturation, personal hobbies or habits, family fellowship or the gathering of friends. And yet, amidst the conundrum of American life, the still small voice of a Galilean prophet, distanced from us two thousands years and thousand of miles, continues his intrepid call. The one who spoke to

¹ Frederick J Gaiser “The Quest For Jesus And The Christian Faith: Introduction” in *The Quest For Jesus And The Christian Faith* (Word & World: Theology for Christian Ministry: pub. Quarterly: St. Paul, Minn., Sept. 1997), 11.

the Galilean fisherman of his day with the words, ‘Come, and follow me’ still invites the sensitive and thoughtful to go after him.²

The Critical Issue: Jesus of Nazareth

Because Jesus is considered by many to be the most influential figure in history, we cannot be silent nor oblivious to his primacy of place among all who investigate history. Thus, we find that with each passing year there is an amazing amount of freshly-churning journals and books on Jesus and implications of such studies. There is more at stake here than academic respectability and annual publisher deadlines: Jesus cannot be ignored. Thoughtful students both of history and theology reverberate with these words of Stephen J. Patterson:

Who was this person in whom generation upon generation of Christians have claimed to see God, in whose name Christians have risen to the heights of what is means to be human in acts of care and compassion, and sunk to the very depths of demonic possession in acts of brutal oppression and violence? These questions draw us back time and again because they are foundational to our understanding of who we are as a culture, and what we would like to be. The quest for the historical Jesus involves more than mere historical inquiry into the life of a famous and influential person. It is a loaded question. It has become a question about ourselves and our search for God.³

On the other hand, disregard of Jesus of Nazareth hastens one into a cultural vacuum, a discounting of powerful religious forces in the world today, and, as argued above, a loss of one’s own self-awareness and fulfillment. Such is the price of ignoring this ancient Jewish teacher. The proverbial ostrich with its head in the sand mirrors many

² Students of Albert Schweitzer will remember that he ends his highly influential book similarly, with Jesus saying ‘Follow thou me!’ Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of it Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), 403. Schweitzer highlighted the apocalyptic mission of Jesus but did do narrowly defined (the kingdom as a radical epochal event), and in so doing found a Jesus remarkably alien to our own time. In understanding Jesus as a prophet, however, he was increasingly optimistic about the Evangelist’s presentation of Jesus. In the end, Schweitzer unfortunately painted a Jesus who was so elusive and distant from modern man that one cannot hope to follow him in any substantial manner (mirroring the authentic Jesus and his concerns).

³ Stephen J. Patterson, *The God of Jesus: The Historical Jesus and the Search for Meaning* (Harrisburg, Pa: Trinity Press Intl., 1998), 14.

Americans today. It is either rash haughtiness (in assuming one knows all there is to know about Jesus) or the folly of a relativistic worldview (in assuming nothing can be known) that repeatedly bespeaks the dialectical tension of an individual shrinking from this task at hand. Against such purviews, many rightly understand this to be a quest of paramount significance.

The Trilemma

“... a very popular conservative apologetic for the deity of Christ stems from C.S. Lewis’ famous ‘trilemma’: the person who did and said the types of things the gospels portray Jesus as doing and saying could be no merely human teacher or prophet, however enlightened or exalted. He must be either a liar, a lunatic or the Lord. The problem with this argument is that it assumes what is regularly denied, namely, that the gospels give entirely accurate accounts of the actions and claims of Jesus. One can preserve Lewis’ alliteration and introduce a fourth option- the stories about Jesus were legends. This option represents the most current explanation of the more spectacular deeds and extravagant claims of Jesus in the gospels: they were the product of the early church’s desire to glorify him, and so it exaggerated its portraits of him above and beyond what the facts permitted. Unless one can successfully dismiss this alternative, one cannot appeal to Lewis’ apologetic.”⁴

⁴ Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (Downer’s Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1987), xx. The issue of myth needs to be discussed here in brief, and centering upon David Friederich Strauss (1808-1874), whose work *Das Leben Jesu* earned him both fame and scorn. Strauss’ work, rather ironically, involved watching the history-faith feud at a distance; all the while mourning over the fact that both were battling over a lost cause, over ground which both could never win. On one hand, Strauss argued that the church was mistaken in seeking to appeal to faith against rational evidence. The way of faith was mistaken, whenever an individual took up the gauntlet that the Gospel accounts were intended to be taken as actual, historically trustworthy. This was pure folly for Strauss. However, contra historical investigation, Strauss also insisted that the rational thinkers like Paulus were mistaken as well. Instead of seeking to understand the Gospel accounts in a rational light, Strauss’ innovation began with the proposal that both opponents understand the Gospel records to be myths, speaking on a unique and different level, wherein neither rational inquiry nor even simple faith dare go. Thus, no damage was committed, either for the church nor the historian; as long as both were hermeneutically responsible to Strauss: that is, following the genre and worldview in which he understood the Gospel writers to speak. Of course, not everyone conceded to Strauss radical hypothesis, but some major Jesus scholars thereon would seek to remunerate Strauss for his initial hard work. For a helpful introduction to Strauss, see: Gregory W. Dawes, ed. *The Historical Jesus Quest: Landmarks In The Search For The Jesus Of History* (Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, 1999), 87-111. It must be remembered that Strauss was heavily influenced by Hegelian thought (and also a student of C.F. Baur), and his offense it not simply in the way he reduced gospel accounts to ‘myths’ but that, for him and Hegel viewing the Absolute Ideal, it is not Jesus who stands alone as unique or supreme in history, but the entirety of the human race to which the ideal is moving toward fulfillment. Straus was also the first to note that John’s Gospel is sorely lacking in historical trustworthiness, a point pronounced forcibly later through H.J. Holtzmann. Following Hegelian influences, Strauss did not employ the term ‘myth’ as synonymous with falsity but rather that in itself, though not

Should Christians involve themselves in contemporary and critical investigations of Jesus? To formulate an answer, one must approach this first, the realization that the

historically objectified, was an account that transcendently evoked eternal 'ideas'. See: Joachim Gnilka, *Jesus Of Nazareth: Message And History* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1997) 3-4. Bart Ehrman presents what he sees as important points of Strauss for modern man: "Today, most people understand a 'myth' to be something that isn't true. For Strauss it was just the opposite. A myth was 'true'. But it didn't happen. Or, more precisely (but put rather simply), for Strauss, a myth is a history-like story that is meant to convey a religious truth. That is, the story is fictional, even though it's told like a historical narrative; its intent is not to convey a history lesson, but to teach about something that is true. The Gospels are full of this kind of story... There are stories in the Gospels that did not happen historically as narrated, but are meant to convey a truth. Few scholars today would follow Strauss in calling these stories 'myths'. The term is too loaded even still, and for most readers it conveys precisely the wrong connotation. But the notion that the Gospel accounts are not 100 percent accurate, while still important for the religious truths they try to convey, is widely shared in the scholarly guild, even though it's not nearly so widely known or believed outside of it. Just about the only scholars who disagree are those who, for theological reasons, believe that the Bible contains the literal, inspired, inerrant, no-mistakes-of-any-kind and no-historical-problems-whatsoever, absolute words directly from God. Everyone else pretty much agrees: the Gospels- whether mostly, usually, commonly, or occasionally (this is where the disputes are)- contain stories that didn't happen as told, which are nonetheless meant to teach a lesson." Bart D. Ehrman, *Jesus: apocalyptic prophet of the new millennium* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1999).Pg 28, 30. Ehrman cites several well-known examples in which apparent contradictions or difficulties among Gospel writers only vanish if one concedes to a myth understanding. He discusses the issue of the time of Jesus' death (comparing Mark with John on the Passover event and Jesus' death), Jesus' birth (Luke's account versus Matthew, Jesus' parent's hometown: Nazareth or Bethlehem), and the census of Quirinius. After all this, Ehrman concludes: "There are dozens of other examples we could look at, but these details from the death and birth of Jesus are probably enough, for now, to make my point: there are accounts in the Gospels that are not historically accurate as narrated. This does not necessarily need to compromise our appreciation of the New Testament Gospels. These accounts were never meant to teach interesting facts about the first century. They are meant to teach things about Jesus." Pg. 40. Another example of this (especially Matthew's usage of Mary as the virgin and Jesus' birth) may be seen in: John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed, *Excavating Jesus: Beneath the Stones, Behind the Texts* (Harper SanFrancisco: New York, 2001), pgs. 77-85. See also: 'Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up?: A Debate between William Lane Craig and John Dominic Crossan, ed., Paul Copan (Baker Books: Grand rapids, 1998). In this book, Crossan makes explicit his hermeneutic of metaphor (avoiding 'mythical' and opting use figurative, metaphorical or symbolic terminology).Speaking of Aesops' fables and the Good Samaritan, Crossan writes: "Most of us understand completely that the sentence 'Jesus lived at Nazareth' is actual, factual, historical, biographical- whatever you would call it. The sentence 'Jesus is the Lamb of God' we know immediately is not the same type of language. It is symbolic, and we have to ask what it means." Pg. 35. All of this, centers upon the issue of genre- what type of literature are the Gospels, and more specifically, what exactly do the Gospel writers seek to convey? Are the Gospels both historical and theological truths about Jesus, or are they simply wrapping real truths of Jesus in a garb that appears as real history (space-time events), but was never intended as such? Suffice it to say here, that there are many historical 'facts' which the Evangelists relate which scholars do not consider myth. These commonly include a list such as: Jesus spoke in parables and often about the kingdom of God, reached out to sinners and outcasts, faced opposition from the religious leadership, in some ways questioned Israelite traditions or recast O.T. passages in a unique light, was baptized or ministered alongside John the Baptist, had twelve disciples as symbolic, challenged the temple structure at least once, and was crucified under Pontius Pilate. It is the purpose of this paper to correlate the historical 'facts' of Jesus with the Triumphal Entry. It is noteworthy that even Marcus Borg and J.D. Crossan does not seem to include the triumphal entry as a 'myth', but rather a factual event (though questioning certain features of such). See: Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan, "Jesus' final week: Collision course" *Christian Century*, (March 20, 2007): 27-31.

church at present, finds itself but one voice among a multitude clamoring for alternative portraits of Jesus. This apprehension is felt from the pulpit to the pew. But what can be done? The quote above speaks directly to the critical issue today: the church may go on constantly echoing C.S. Lewis' trilemma (Jesus is either liar, lunatic or Lord), but it does so against the dissatisfaction (and disservice) of many who are truly disturbed by the deeper issues in historical criticism. One of the greatest hindrance today in presenting the claims of Jesus (other than the equally disturbing postmodern relativism), is found among a large segment of the judicious who hold that the early church has largely created this 'Jesus of Nazareth' according to their own whims (the *Sitz im Leben* of the church). And this prevailing assumption is certainly neither novel nor naive. It is the culmination of three hundred years of critical research and support.⁵ In response to such allegations, a growing number of evangelicals are interacting with a larger body of scholars who are seeking to present, by historical methodologies, an authentic portrait of Christ in keeping with the Gospel narratives. In other words, rather than prefer an ultimate stalemate; between wholesale acceptance of the Gospel records and opposing critical inductive methodologies, many Christians contend that only by interacting deeply with the Gospel records, and utilizing critical criteria, can one present the person and mission of Jesus of Nazareth with both integrity and sincerity to the nonbelieving world. This paper then, will not begin with the oft-used trilemma mentioned above, but rather will seek to press that proposition into service only *after* one has wrestled with the Gospel records and

⁵ Space does not permit a review of major thinkers and movements which were involved in the quests for the historical Jesus. Standard books usually review key figures from the deists to Hermann Reimarus and Lessing (1774-1778 the years which Lessing published Reimarus' devastating, posthumous works) to Strauss (mythical genre of the Gospels and German idealism) onward to Schleiermacher and Bultmann (existential), Wrede and Schweitzer (battling over skepticism or optimism in the Gospels and the kingdom as apocalyptic, realized or unknown) and entering the modern arena with Kasemann, Sanders, Wright and others. The issues and nomenclature of the 'third quest' and the past will be discussed later.

acquiesce to their authenticity. Only then can one satisfactorily present C.S. Lewis' three choices to the skeptical world.

The intent of this paper ultimately then, is to demonstrate that once relevant criteria is consistently applied to the Triumphal entry and has found the Markan record to be entirely plausible, then it behooves people to confront Jesus as he appears in that narrative.⁶ For, in the Markan text, one faces the triumphant Jesus, the one who is both

⁶ Of course, this statement engenders the perennial complexity for the church regarding the relationship between faith and reason. As in apologetical methodologies so in Jesus research; and there is wide disagreement among Christians regarding Jesus research- its nature, motive, methods and goals. In either discipline, the nature of man (*imago dei* and *in curvitas*), common ground, and validating truth present the fundamental disagreements. So, for instance, the unspoken assumption hitherto in this paper, has been the belief that commitment to demonstrate the authenticity of the Gospel account does *not* betray a lack of trust in the beauty of faith. But this is by no means the only perspective in Christendom. Some scholars dismiss any historical investigation of Jesus as antithetical to faith. Others argue that historical investigation is the proper foundation for faith, or else faith is hopelessly denuded in a sea of confusion (the complexities inherent in circular reasoning or holding to beliefs without recourse to verification or falsification). Others seek to separate the two spheres of historical investigation and faith, as two distinct and important fields but each operating within its own strictures. Finally, many argue that faith is nourished through historical investigation, and that whereas one begins in faith, it finds understanding and support through analytical tools. Here then, we have, as in apologetics, four perennial voices on this matter (the spirit of the past lives on: Tertullian, Kierkegaard, Aquinas and Augustine, seen, albeit imperfectly, in individuals such as Luke Johnson -faith as antithetical to traditional historical investigation, John Meier- the demarcation of faith and reason, J.D. Crossan- reason is the foundation, and N.T. Wright- faith seeking understanding). And so, on the one end of the spectrum, Christian scholars are wary of any attempts to adjudicate the person and mission of Jesus with the nonbelieving world at large. In this advocacy, Luke Timothy Johnson candidly writes: "Instead of an effort to rectify the distorting effect of the gospel narratives, the effort to reconstruct Jesus according to some other pattern appears increasingly as an attempt to flee the scandal of the gospel... From the start, Christianity has been rooted in the paradoxical claim that a human being executed as a criminal is the source of God's life-giving and transforming Spirit. From the start, this 'good news' has been regarded as foolishness to the wise of the world. Christianity has never been able to 'prove' its claims except by appeal to the experiences and convictions of those already convinced... The claims of the gospel cannot be demonstrated logically. They cannot be proved historically. They can be validated only existentially by the witness of authentic Christian discipleship. The more the church has sought to ground itself in something other than the transforming work of the Spirit, the more it has sought to buttress its claims by philosophy and history, the more it has sought to defend itself against its cultured despisers by means of sophisticated apology, the more also it has missed the point of its existence, which is not to take a place within worldly wisdom but to bear witness to the reality of a God who transforms suffering and death with the power of new life ." Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels*. (Harper San Francisco: New York, 1996), 166, 168. Richard Bauckham, too, writes warily of critical conclusions: "What is in question is whether the reconstruction of a Jesus other than the Jesus of the gospels, the attempt, in other words, to do all over again what the Evangelists did, though with different methods, critical historical methods, can ever provide the kind of access to the reality of Jesus that Christian faith and theology have always trusted we have in the Gospels. By comparison with the gospels, any Jesus reconstructed by the quest cannot fail to be reductionist from the perspective of Christian faith and theology." Richard Bauckham, *Jesus And The Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: William. B. Eerdmans Pub., 2006), 4.

Mary M. Knutsen, however, offers the rejoinder that any biography is in some sense, reductionistic and reflective of the various frameworks, sources and intents. See: Frederick J Gaiser, ed., *The Quest For Jesus And The Christian Faith*, 13. This brings one, then, to the issue of presuppositions of those employing research. To this end, Carl F. H. Henry wrote: "What is objectionable is not the historical-critical method, but rather the alien presuppositions to which neo-protestant scholars subject it. [The] combination of the method with an antisupernaturalistic bias reflects not a requirement of the method but a prejudice of the historian ... There is no reason to allow scholars absolutely to redefine the term *critical* so that it coincides with historical and hermeneutical skepticism." C. F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority* (Waco: Word, 1979), 4. 393. And so, the spectrum of perceptions concerning Jesus research moves along another end. I. Howard Marshall is more optimistic of such historical research. I Howard Marshall writes: "There is no reason in principle why historical study should lead a reader who has accepted the biblical story as 'Gospel truth' to confess in desperation, 'They have taken away my Lord'. On the contrary, historical science can supply a sound basis for assessing the historical worth of the gospels, and there is no reason to suppose that this verdict will necessarily be a negative one." I. Howard Marshall, *I believe in the historical Jesus* (Iowa: Word Bible Publishers, 1999), 50-51. Howard Marshall writes further: "The sinner seeking forgiveness has been assured from the Gospels that Jesus did receive sinners and that as the risen savior still receives them. It is not a jump in the dark. It is a commitment based on reasonable knowledge. It is not clutching at a straw, but a laying hold on a firm hope. Faith starts from knowledge, even if it reaches beyond it, and its character as faith is not destroyed by its association with knowledge. In the New Testament itself the demand for faith is also based on the supplying of information about Jesus." Marshall, *I believe in the historical Jesus*, 82. This is reflected here as well here: "Because both Old and New Testaments view God as one who is always and forever inclined toward incarnation, that is, a God who is profoundly interested in and committed to history, so those who share biblical faith will also be interested in and committed to history. Asking historical questions is always asking theological questions- unless one brackets God out of history, which the Bible is never willing to do. As Hans Walter Wolff has said, it is the incarnational God who took the risk of making himself an object of historical study. Had God not wanted people to engage in quests for the historical Yahweh (or the historical Jesus), God should have remained safely in heaven where gods belong. But God did not, and so we cannot- we cannot eschew the history that God embraced. Historical investigation is part and parcel of biblical faith." Frederick J Gaiser, *The Quest For Jesus And The Christian Faith*, 5-6. See: Charles B. Cousar, "The Historical Jesus: So What?", *Journal For Preachers*, 23. no. 4 Pentecost 2000 pgs. 10-15. pg. 14. See also: Jon Sobrino "The Historical Jesus And The Christ Of Faith: The Tension Between Faith And Religion" *Cross Currents* 27, no.4 (Winter, 1977-1978):437-463. Pg. 438. Also: Douglas John Hall "We Would See Jesus" *The Living Pulpit* (Jan-March, 1994): pgs 1-3. Alan F. Johnson, "The Historical-Critical Method: Egyptian Gold Or Pagan Precipice?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society Volume 26* . (2002): 14. The fact that there are four gospels and one historical narrative should awaken us to the fact that, far from the New Testament containing simply theological truths and axiomatic claims concerning Christ, the church, salvation eschatology, etc., the Bible does seem to welcome historical inquiry (in contradistinction from many other religions), and that Christians who have discounted the narratives of scripture have seceded to the suspicion of the general populace that the life of Christ is of marginal importance for the believer and only serves as mythical truths containing gross inconsistencies. John P. Meiers is insightful in his perception of those who object. He writes: "Strange to say, such resistance to the quest comes much more often from committed Christians than from agnostics or Christian 'drop-outs' ... It is rather the staunch believer who often feels that the quest is at best a waste of time and at worst a threat to faith. In this camp one finds strange bedfellows: strict followers of Rudolph Bultmann and dye-in-the-wool fundamentalists. For opposite reasons they come to the same conclusion: the quest for the historical Jesus is irrelevant or even harmful to true Christian faith." John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, Vol. 1, *The Roots of the Problem and the Person* (New York: Doubleday Publishers, 1991), 196. Needless to say, most 'fundamentalists' would not wish to be placed in this category alongside Bultmann. Meier continues, importantly, with four reasons why the Jesus quests, are of crucial importance for believers. These include: (1) it distances Jesus from the mythical in which he is removed from historical events in the space-time continuum, (2) it permits Jesus to be seen as the Chalcedon formula conjoins, as both fully God and fully man, and that in first century Palestine, (3) studying Jesus creates considerable tension in that he represents several characteristics for which one might be embarrassed (opposition to religious leaders, association with the lowly, etc.), and, (4) in Meier's own words: "Like good sociology, the historical Jesus subverts not

king and suffering servant. Thankfully, as we shall see, the Third Quest for the historical Jesus has come alongside our present day condition and is stripping away some of the persistently antagonistic ghosts of form criticism (that is, radical assumptions regarding the church's creativity as well as the radical disjunction between faith and history). In the end, the hope here is that each person will be persuaded to make a self-conscious and deliberate response to Jesus of Nazareth, who rode 'triumphant' into Jerusalem. One may dismiss Jesus as a deliberate liar, hold him to be an insane or hallucinating apocalyptic fireball, or fall in worship before him as Lord. But, fancying that he is simply a reconstruction of the Evangelists should not be sustained. This, nonetheless, is the burden of the church today and the beauty of the Evangelists' portraits of Christ.

Jesus of History & Christ of Faith

"We need at this point to pause over the whole question of how we will gain access to the historical Jesus. The gospels are our main resource, but they are dedicated to promoting resurrection-focused understandings of Jesus, contributing to post-resurrection controversies, responding to post-resurrection impulses and obligations... So we return to face the square reality- the *brutum factum*, as one might say- that our main resource consists of documents that in whole and in part promote resurrection- focused understandings of Jesus. This means that the stories and sayings in them have often been colored and conditioned- maybe sometimes created- by a set of convictions about Jesus as he had come to be acknowledged and experienced after Easter."⁷

just some ideologies but all ideologies, including liberation theology. Indeed, the usefulness of the historical Jesus to theology is that he ultimately eludes all our neat theological programs; he brings all of them into question by refusing to fit into the boxes we create for him. Paradoxically, although the quest for the historical Jesus is often linked in the popular secular mind with 'relevance', his importance lies precisely in his strange, off-putting, embarrassing contours, equally offensive to right and left wings. To this extent, at least, Albert Schweitzer was correct. The more we appreciate what Jesus meant in his own time and place, the more 'alien' he will seem to us." Pgs. 198-200. Consider too, this statement: "Official Christianity was officially saved from Docetism- the denial that Jesus was a real human being- by the doctrine of the incarnation (the word really did become flesh, and did not just appear to do so) and by the affirmation of two natures in Christ, one being 'very man of very man'. The doctrine which officially 'saved' the church from Docetism has not, however, managed to save all believers from the theological error of denying that Jesus was a real man and, in consequence, lived a real history. We think that a full affirmation of 'truly man' must be made and must not be compromised by supposing that Jesus is not a fit subject for historical inquiry." E.P. Sanders and Margaret Davies, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels* (Philadelphia: Trinity Pres, 1996), 303.

⁷ David Catchpole, *Jesus People: The Historical Jesus And The Beginnings Of Community* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2006), 55, 56. Joachim Gnilka's comment reflects this: "It began with the 'quest of the

It is imperative to begin with the recognition that Jesus research operates under the shadow of the broken treaty between history and faith.⁸ That broken treaty is a three-

historical Jesus', which was itself as child of the Enlightenment and was ill-fated from the start. It undertook the separation of Jesus and the Gospels...out of the suspicion that the Jesus described for us in the Gospels is not identical to the historical Jesus. The important task therefore, was to rescue him from the clutches of dogmatism and to present him as he really was." Joachim Gnilka, *Jesus Of Nazareth*, 2.

⁸ It should be mentioned here at the outset, that many reject such a distinction between the Jesus of faith and the Jesus of history as normally understood. Thus, Meiers rejects the standard-fare terminology, inherited from Kahler, concerning the distinction between the historical Jesus (what pertains to historical analysis) and the historical Christ (what is the kerygma of the early church). In this article, Meiers states four reasons in particular for his disapproval: "(1) After close to a century of use, the distinction, remains ambiguous and varies in meaning or function from author to author, with even some Germans not accepting it. (2) The distinction, while supposedly employed to facilitate objective research, often carries with it extra baggage of theological or ideological agendas. (3) The twofold distinction does not do justice to the complexity of the situation. (4) While defensible in theory, it is useless in the real world- even the 'real' world of scholars." John P. Meier, "The Historical Jesus: Rethinking Some Concepts", *Theological Studies*, Vol. 51, No.1 (March 1990): 6. Meiers sums up his anxiety over the old distinction and, fortunately, presents a more plausible approach (utilizing clearer terminology such as the 'real', 'historical' and the 'earthly' Jesus). He writes: "The real Jesus is not available, and never will be, by historical-critical methods. This is true not because Jesus did not exist- he certainly did- but rather because the sources that have survived do not and never intended to record all or even most of the words and deeds of his public ministry- to say nothing of the rest of his life... In brief, the Jesus of history is a modern abstraction and construct, not to be equated with the 'real Jesus, whether that reality be understood as 'total' or just 'reasonably complete'. By the Jesus of history I mean the Jesus whom we can 'recover' and examine by using the scientific tools of modern historical research. Since such research arose only with the Enlightenment in the 18th century (Hermann Reimarus { 1694-1768 } being the first famous example of a 'quester'), the quest for the historical Jesus is a particularly modern endeavor and has its own tangled history from Reimarus to E.P. Sanders and beyond. Of its very nature this quest can reconstruct only fragments of a mosaic, the faint outline of a faded fresco that allows for many interpretations... the historical Jesus is not the real Jesus, and vice versa. The historical Jesus may give us fragments of the real person, but nothing more." Pg. 18-19 Meiers, of course, is committed to a distinctly Christian perspective, which he is, to his credit, is crucial also in this discussion. He goes on to relate that there is also a crucial distinction between the 'historical Jesus' and the risen Jesus, which is not able to be empirically verified but which is distinctly theological and outside the realm of standard research and the object of faith as the risen, living Lord (Meiers supports here, in aim but not in program, both Bultmann and Kahler in stating that the Jesus whom is believed in by the church is not the Jesus reached by analysis of history), and thus all believers have access to whom without the scrutinizing interrogations of the historical-critical method. See pgs. 21-22. From the vantage point of the church, one popular perspective exemplifying the distrust surrounding the distinction between the Jesus of history and the Jesus of faith is seen in this manner: "...the Jesus of history is not and cannot be the object of Christian faith. A moment's reflection will make clear why that must be so. More than a millennium and a half of Christians believed firmly in Jesus Christ without having any clear idea or access to the historical Jesus as understood today, yet no one will deny the validity or strength of their faith. The same can be said of many pious Christians in developed as well as developing countries today. But, even if all Christians were acquainted with the concepts and research connected with the historical Jesus, the Church could not make the historical Jesus the object of its preaching and faith. The reason is obvious: Whose historical Jesus would be the object of faith? Albert Schweitzer's? ...Moreover, and more importantly, the sole object of Christian faith is not and cannot be an idea or scholarly reconstruction, however reliable. For the believer, the object of Christian faith is a living person, Jesus Christ, who fully entered into a true human existence on earth in the 1st century AD, but who now lives, risen and glorified, forever in the Father's presence. Primarily, Christian faith affirms and adheres to this person... In the realm of faith and theology, the 'real Jesus', the only Jesus existing and

century-old breach which seemingly demands hesitancy in religious assurance, but yet simultaneously exists amidst the persistent worship of a man of whom we supposedly know very little and yet of whom the world still largely revolves.⁹ William R. Herzog II targets exactly what is at issue today, that is, the tension between faith and historical investigation, between the church and the world:

“One of the perennial problems in the study of the historical Jesus is how to weigh and evaluate the traditions in the Gospels, especially the Synoptic Gospels, but the extracanonical gospels and sayings as well. In short, how can we use the current materials in the Gospels as a means to look behind them in order to glimpse the elusive figure of Jesus to whom they bear witness? It is a bit like doing archaeology. Archaeologists begin at the end, at the surface of the tell, and then excavate backwards in time as they dig deeper and establish the stratigraphy of the site. The Gospels are like literary tells. We begin at the end, with the canonical form of the text, but work backwards to earlier forms of the units of tradition found in the Gospel texts. It is a process replete with complexity and uncertainty, and it only yields disputable results.”¹⁰

living now, is this risen Lord, to whom access is given only through faith.” John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 197-198.

⁹ It must always be borne in mind too; that extreme skepticism regarding what can be known of Jesus is unwarranted. Graham Stanton writes to this end: “Today nearly all historians, whether Christians or not, accept that Jesus existed and that the gospels contain plenty of valuable evidence which has to be weighed and assessed critically. There is general agreement that with the possible exception of Paul, we know far more about Jesus of Nazareth than about any other first- or second-century Jewish or pagan religious teacher.” Graham Stanton, *The Gospels and Jesus*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 145.

¹⁰ William R. Herzog II, *Prophet and Teacher: An Introduction to the Historical Jesus* (Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, 2005), 25. Paula Fredrikson echoes this same divide as she speaks of the situation facing Jesus scholars today. Her comment provides access into her own perceptions of the Gospels and the dilemmas for the historian of Jesus: “In brief, where Jesus’ teaching was oral and his setting Jewish, Aramaic, rural, and Palestinian, the evangelists’ is written, mixed (that is, Jewish and Gentile both), linguistically Greek, and probably within the matrix of the Diaspora city. Flung over the gap between these distinctions, across time, space, culture, and ethnicity, are the human filaments of oral tradition. Ultimately, many stories and sayings presented in the Gospels probably do go back across these various frontiers to the original followers of Jesus. But eyewitness testimony is never scientific or objective, first of all because the witness is human... Further, these stories would have been told and retold- by those of the original generation during their lifetimes; by the later, intervening generations for theirs- before achieving the relative stability of writing. Revision and amplification inevitably travel along this chain of transmission, again because its links are human... Nor did the eventual achievement of written form fully stabilize these traditions from and about Jesus, as a simple comparison of these four Gospels shows. The Gospels differ among themselves... To make sense of such contrasting traditions, scholars have to devise interpretive strategies... Such weighing and choosing, and self-conscious reflection upon the reasons for making our choice, are all part of the process of historical reasoning. As we proceed through the Gospel material, then, the first task must be to become aware of its complications and difficulties as historical evidence.” Paula Fredrikson, *Jesus of Nazareth King Of The Jews: A Jewish Life and the Emergence of Christianity* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 19, 20.

The operative assumption for Herzog, a standard fare among historians, is that the Gospels must be scrutinized for authenticity, peeled back to reveal what is hoped to be authentic in the Gospel traditions (because, assumedly, not all of it is). This is the explicit dilemma between faith and reason, between the Church's call and the world's response. Today, as well as over the last three centuries, there remains a yawning gap between faith (the Gospel accounts as entirely reliable and reverently followed) and that of historical investigation (critical assumptions and tools which govern historical reconstructions).¹¹

¹¹ Modernity was an age characterized appropriately by its reaction to the medieval age, that is, the pre-modern era, with its reverent respect for the transcendent and that of biblical authority. At the end, through scientific analysis and historical investigation, notable individuals had one of three basic options: to follow a submissive treaty with the church against their contrary scientific conclusions, to silently write of their findings and wait for posthumous justification, or to pursue an outright assault against traditional strictures. One recounts important persons promulgating any of those paths. Men such as Lorenzo Valla in 1440 (studying the Decree of Gratian and declaring it a forgery), Copernicus with his 1543 revolution (geocentric not heliocentric as the church supposed), and even Martin Luther (on October 31, 1517). Also notable here is the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) in which Europe was caught up in deadly battle of religion and nationalistic zeal. These are but a few of the decisive moments toward modernity. However one views these issues from a cultural perspective, they surely produced some response upon their contemporaries, albeit either subtle or subversive questioning. In retrospect, we can see the dividing line progressing rather clearly: the rift between faith and history had begun. On the one side stood the church, and on the other; rational inquiry, supported with historical investigation, autonomous reasoning, and the scientific method. The winters of medieval scholarship had past and a great bear was awakening from hibernation with the hurled strength of *ad fontes*, coupled with new instruments of precision capable of measuring both land, sea and stars and that of human reasoning pouring out masterpieces of literature, art and technology. It was a time of freedom. In this dawning, philosophy too, found itself unleashed from its benign service. Once a potent handmaid of the church, it roared out on its own. As is popular in historical evaluation, modern philosophy is often viewed as beginning through the work of Rene Descartes. Descartes who, of course, in 1637 produced his famous methodology starting with *cogito ergo sum*. That is, the foundation of all reasoning found in the bedrock of autonomous human reasoning, of which God and the world were derivative. Spinoza was not far behind, a few years following, and creating such a strong rupture between orthodox allegiance to the church's divinely revealed authority and his own mind that he was forthrightly excommunicated from his home synagogue. He perhaps more brazen than many, aptly captures the liberated spirit of human freedom, breaking the yoke of revelation and reason. Concerning the Scriptures, he wrote in his *Theologico-Political Treatise*, that it "...has no authority over the interpreter's mind. It may govern his actions, but only if he is somewhat intelligent. If he is truly rational, reason alone will govern his whole life". Narrowing down such features, one can see that modernity's essence involves several key characteristics. Moreover, these characteristics even serve to elucidate major components of contemporary Jesus research. Among these are: (1) reason is guide in life, to which all things become submissive (authority from below- disabling the transcendent), (2) the natural sciences/empiricism gaining ascendancy (notably the laws of nature are inviolable), and (3) the uncertainty of history as per factual reconstructions (developing much slower alongside these, chastened by modernity's folly, but its final fruit to postmodernity). Here, one notices the rationalism of the seventeenth century and the empiricism of the

Perhaps too, this breach is best understood as a historian evaluates the Gospels *prima facie*. Though it appears unduly harsh to state it so baldly, the Gospels are, for all intent and purposes, propaganda literature. That is, the Gospel writers are both unanimously and personally committed to the idea that God was truly present and active in the life of Jesus, But further, these writers believed that the claims of Christ's unique status and mission (as salvific for the sins of the world), are to be seen as mandatory for all people. Properly understood, then, Gospel writers wrote for a distinctive theological purpose. They were determined to present Jesus of Nazareth as exalted, Jesus as both as the ultimate prophet and powerful Son of God, and whose claims must apprehend both believers and unbelievers toward a decisive response (whether through evangelism or edification).¹² And, of course, in response to such propaganda, historians, by and large, are reticent to accept such documents wholesale.¹³ Into this acknowledgment is the in-

eighteenth century conjoined with historical investigations as *the* potent tool in the investigative process. See: James D.G. Dunn *Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making Vol. 1* (William B. Eerdmans Pub: Grand Rapids, 2003). Chs. 3,4, 5. In fact, adding to the difficulty here, the phrase 'the historical Jesus' can mean at least three different things: (1) Jesus as he lived in certain time/space during his earthly ministry in Palestine (2) Jesus as he is accessible by historical investigation and only of a limited nature which cannot produce everything and all about that individual (which entails that a great portion of the 'real' historical Jesus is not available, as John's Gospel attests in John 21:25), and, last, as the crucial issue of this paper (3) the Jesus available to modern historians with various methodologies/criteria which, all too often, approach the Gospels skeptically and provide alternative portraits of Jesus other than as the church traditionally envisioned him to be. See: Richard Bauckham, *Jesus And The Eyewitnesses*, 2-5.

¹² To be more precise, the Gospels as they appear are suitable to a number of purposes: evangelism, apologetics, catechism, edification of communities in worship, teaching, correction, etc. Evangelicals have been quick to pursue issues of purpose (as in hermeneutical studies: an author's purpose for writing correlates to both his plan and process. However, when evaluating an author's purpose in recounting history, it is naïve to be immediately dismissive simply because of one's orientation or motivation for writing. Veracity is not precluded simply on this category alone.

¹³ One can go either way here in regards to the theological intent and propaganda nature of the Gospels (written to instruct and persuade others of the lofty nature of Jesus of Nazareth). One might presuppose that writings with a theological bent are less likely to provide accurate and reliable information regarding Jesus (a quite common presupposition). Others, however, agree with Markus Bockmuehl in finding great veracity in the Gospels simply because of their theological intent: "The Gospels were not written as novels, with the primary purpose of entertainment, but as evangelists: that is to say, they are didactic and persuasive or apologetic works about events which transpired in their own time. This makes it even more likely that questions about the reliability and truth value of their sources were a prominent concern for the authors. All self-respecting Christian catechesis had to keep an eye on public credibility (cf. also Col. 5:5 f.; 1 Pet. 3:15f.)." Markus Bockmuehl, *This Jesus: Martyr, Lord, Messiah* (Ill.: Intervarsity Press: 1994), 20. Of

bred suspicion that finding deposits of truth among such theological jargon require more than a simple pickaxe.

Here then is the famous disjunction between the Christ of faith and the Jesus of history, presented by the ever-continuing investigation to discover who Jesus really was, in distinct relief from the boundaries of the Church's catechisms. It is this prevailing disjunction that drives many a person on their journey to discover the 'real' Jesus. And, as with all journeys of eternal consequence, this road has for some climaxed on mountains vistas of delight but concurrently shunted countless others into endless mazes, dead ends, and the depths of despair. As would be expected, history, for many, has violently opposed faith; it *did* not comply to any cathedral claims. Indeed, it *could* not, not in view of the unsurpassed Jesus of Nazareth, before whom time and culture continually bows. Thus, despite lofty reverence and the worshipper's clamor, the figure of Jesus was exposed to repeated attempts of historical criticism.¹⁴ James D.G. Dunn speaks to this:

course, one might also opt, following Strauss, that historical veracity and a correspondence theory of truth does not meet the nature or requirements of the Gospels as myth-literature. Something like this is found in the works of J.D. Crossan. Thus, it is not fair to categorize the Gospels as simply either true or false (that is, according to the manner of empirical reports), but also possibly belonging to the category of 'myth-poetry (another category altogether and safe from verification/falsification, but troubling in that it finds narrative genre placed alongside purported myths and must constantly adjudicate differences and methods pertaining to each). It must be noted here that Crossan faults Evangelicals who permit some 'myths' into the Gospels accounts (for instance; the dead rising from their tombs at Christ's death in Mt. 27:52-53, and the birth accounts of Jesus) but then simultaneously assign Crossan's own reconstructions as arbitrary and unbiblical. See: *'Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up? A Debate between William Lane Craig and John Dominic Crossan*, ed., Paul Copan (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998).

¹⁴ Craig Blomberg stresses the impact of historical criticism: "The history of the last two centuries of gospel criticism, therefore, has been dominated by hypotheses which presuppose that the four evangelists do not narrate reliable history." Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, 7. See also: Craig A. Evans, *Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels* (Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 20. And: Graham Stanton, *The Gospels and Jesus*, 4. In this book, Stanton helpfully summarizes the historical development of this breach: "For a long period in the nineteenth century the gospels were seen as historically reliable records or as biographies. In the early decades of the twentieth century the gospels came to be seen as anthologies of traditions which had been shaped by the life and faith of the early Christian communities in which they were transmitted. The gospels were 'proclamation' and not in any sense 'records' of the past. Following the Second World War attention turned

“If God did indeed express himself through Jesus of Nazareth during his three (or whatever) years of mission, probably in the late 20’s of the common era, predominately in the relatively remote region of Lower Galilee, then it is of first importance to observe what he said and did during these three years and in that context as clearly as possible. And if later reflection has elaborated (or obscured) the witness of Jesus himself, then it is proper to want to strip away the elaboration (or obscurity).”¹⁵

Many have thus promoted this stripping away of portions of the New Testament gospels, those portions that do not fare particularly well against the historian’s scrutiny. Yes, the honors do not go to Thomas Jefferson alone.¹⁶ And though he was but one who reflected the cultural climate of enlightened principles, we shall see that his scissors are incessantly being sharpened against popular tools, critical methodologies and unwarranted presuppositions. In the present state of affairs, the breach between faith and history has not diminished. Many know full well that these two seemingly disparate ideologies did not begin as a peaceful truce and that they will not likely wed happily in

to the distinctive emphases of the individual evangelists. Finally, and most recently, many scholars have used insights drawn from modern literary criticism and interpreted the gospels as stories with characters and dramatic plots.” Pg. 14. Thus, today, ‘who Jesus really was’ is often interpreted to mean that there exists two distinct versions of Jesus. As we saw before, many Jesus scholars in the church seek to uphold the biblical portrait of the exalted Christ, but also ‘play the game’ with non-believing critics who seek to undermine the biblical text arbitrarily. Of course, the question that must be asked is this: though N.T. Wright, for instance, who apparently assists many in the church in a more complete and contextual portrait of Jesus, likewise serve those outside the church? More specifically; how many will find amusement in the fact that Wright’s historical reconstruction aligns itself nicely with the Gospel portrait, of which he remains committed? Again, the issue of presuppositions, even in this ‘postmodern world’ can never be dismissed. But its existence, likewise, should not immediately consign any reconstruction to arbitrariness. Throughout this paper, the question which will haunt each page is this: how strong is the clash between opposing worldviews over the nature of Jesus studies? Is there any hope of reconciliation, or at the least, civil and mutual interaction with opposing views. This paper, ultimately, seeks to not only edify the body of Christ, but also challenge the methodologies and base assumptions of skeptical portraits of Christ, especially in regard to the triumphal entry. Many might say, the latter objective is but a fool’s errand. Be what may, this paper finds applauds N.T. Wright’s approach of interacting not just in the church but also in academy or marketplace. It appreciates St. Augustine’s influence, who sought to spoil the treasures of the Egyptians but simultaneously refuse the dross.

¹⁵ James D.G. Dunn *A New Perspective On Jesus: What the Quest for the Historical Jesus Missed* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books Academic, 2005), 11.

¹⁶ It will be remembered that Thomas Jefferson belonging properly to deisms and sought to remove, with scissors in hand, the supernatural and what appeared to him, the irrational elements of Christianity in the Gospels. Thomas Jefferson, *The Life And Morals Of Jesus Of Nazareth: Extracted Textually from the Gospels, together with a comparison of his doctrines with those of others* (New York: N.D. Thompson Publishing Co., 1902).

the future. For now, history is having its full say, and it appears to quite a large number that it has had the upper hand for several centuries, as it continues to investigate a Jesus who often appears strangely distanced from the portrait found in the Gospels. But all is not lost. There is, for many today, a powerful movement which is, at present, recognizing the theological dimensions of the Evangelists' portrait and again conceded that a radical disjunction between faith and history is unwarranted. It is termed the 'Third Quest'.

The Third Quest

“There is now a real attempt to do history seriously. Josephus, so long inexplicably ignored, is suddenly and happily in vogue. There is a real willingness to be guided by first-century sources, and to see the Judaism of that period in all its complex pluriformity, and with the help now available from modern studies of the history and literature of the period... The Old Quest was determined that Jesus should look as little like first-century Jews as possible... the present 'Third Quest', by and large, will have none of this. Jesus must be understood as a comprehensible and yet, so to speak, crucifiable first-century Jew... Now the damn has burst altogether, allowing a flood of scholarly and serious historical books on Jesus to sweep the market in the space of a very few years. Instead of the Old Quest brought to a close by Schweitzer, and the New Quest inaugurated by Kasemann (and revived by the Jesus Seminar), we now have a phenomenon which is arguably sufficiently distinct to deserve the title of a "Third Quest'.”¹⁷

Here we approach what is termed the 'Third Quest'¹⁸. Its' main contention, contra the quests before it, is that the more one studies first-century Palestine, with all the relevant

¹⁷ N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 83, 85-86.

¹⁸ One should be fully aware, that a range of scholars disagree as to the nomenclature and methodologies employed for the 'Third Quest'. Is there really a *Third Quest*? In what ways is it unique from past research of Jesus? Stanley Porter dismisses the novelty of those who claim to be involved in a Third Quest at present. For him, the methods and evaluations of today also were concurrent even among older and now obviously dubious skeptical methodologies. Porter, noting the several criteria in vogue today (double dissimilarity, Semitic language, coherence and Christ's rejection-death plausibility reconstructions), writes: "...all of the criteria have been proposed, modified, and criticized through the centuries, and to some extent do not offer more now than they did in the past... This brief synopsis of the criteria including several recent developments, illustrates one of the major limitations of recent historical Jesus research that wishes to establish itself as new, independent, and significant- its failure to develop its own set of criteria. Even if we concede that there is greatly increased knowledge of the social, linguistic, and cultural environments in which Jesus lived, the criteria by which these data are evaluated reflect much earlier periods in discussion. This may be acceptable, but it certainly does not promote or support the idea that we have entered a new period of Jesus research if we use the same criteria to evaluate the evidence... Two things are certain, however, regarding the quest for the historical Jesus. One is that it will continue, probably without widespread agreement on a number of either methodological issues or significant conclusions. The other is

data and credence given to then-current manuscripts, the picture that emerges on the whole, is increasingly aligned with that of the Gospel records (without, of course, conceding to its authenticity in entirety). Instead of studying discrete units of speech (one thinks here of the destructive tendencies in form criticism) devaluing the Gospel writers (source criticism with its over-dependence on the Evangelists' dependence) and separating theology from history (redaction criticisms' proclivity to excess), the Third Quest seeks to employ principles which account for all the relevant data and seeks to

that the Gospels as transmitted to us will continue to be central to the discussion, and knowledge and appreciation of the must remain paramount, for without them we have cut ourselves off from any direct link to the foundations of the investigation.” 54-55. Porter concludes by offering several lines of progress many have taken: inquiry into the origin and ambitions of methodologies utilized (especially as it is antithetical to the church and faith in many ways), discussing possible new criteria but acknowledging they are but in infancy, a complete disregard of criteria altogether, and probability indexes. Further still, even amongst conservative scholars, there is much disagreement among themselves on the pilgrimage of third questers (or as Porter who questions it appropriateness as a new age). Stanley E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals* (England: Sheffield Academic Press:, 2000), 31-37, 54-55. See also pgs 55—59 Raymond Brown and Graham Stanton may also be taken as also representative of this skeptical approach to there being three distinct quests. See, for instance: Graham Stanton, *The Gospels and Jesus*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 165. Dale C. Allison concurs as well. Against attempts to portray the Third Quest as substantially unique (apocalyptic eschatology, Jesus' Jewishness, lack of theological agenda, volume of works produced), Allison remarks: “Although there is indeed a contemporary quest for Jesus, it is not manifest that there really is much new or distinctive about it. Certainly the current search is not a think easily fenced off from its predecessors. It has no characteristic method. It has no body of shared conclusions. It has no common set of historiographical or theological presuppositions. And trying to locate its beginning is like trying to find the origins of modern science: the ever-present continuity with and debt to the past make convenient divisions into neat periods suspect.” Dale C. Allison, “*The Secularizing of the Historical Jesus*” *Perspectives In Religious Studies* 27, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 143. In the end, Allison favors rather that the triad be abandoned and that surveys be done according to specific portraits of Jesus that emerge. Thus, perhaps a promising descriptive device illustrating these three quests might best be undertaken through evaluating the issues along the lines of continuity-discontinuity. That is, what methods, paradigm and assumptions are present among Jesus scholars, from the past to today? In one sense, the old quests share similar assumptions with many scholars today but the methodologies and available research have changed somewhat dramatically in the past twenty years due to linguistic, sociological, literary and archaeological research. On the other hand, against skeptical perspectives on the triadic approach, other scholars see enough substantial differences to merit a new quest (such as James D.G. Dunn and N.T. Wright). Craig Evans writes: “The presuppositions of the Third Quest differ from those of the Old and New Quests in several important areas... (1) myth and miracle, (2) historical value of the Gospels, and (3) theological apologetics. Not all will agree with my assessment of these topics, but I think most will agree that the Third Quest represents a major break from the assumptions and methods that characterize the first two centuries of historical Jesus research (ca. 1770's to 1970s).” 2. If one bears in mind that regarding the triadic quests and their characteristics are pedagogical and generalizations at best, one can utilize the ‘Third Quest’ nomenclature as providing useful historical delineations.

present a comprehensive portrayal of Jesus.¹⁹ This is not to say that all agree, or that the findings of the majority of scholars have produced an evangelical portrait of Christ straight out of the Gospel accounts.²⁰ Rather, it is to say that, whereas before Jesus was, all too often, but a mirror of then-current presuppositions, the Jesus of the Third Quest fits remarkably well back in first-century Palestine, and in many ways one is encouraged to consciously distance Jesus from their own preconceived projections or aspirations.²¹

¹⁹ “‘Source criticism’ is the effort to find the earliest gospel, or sources now lost but used by one or more of them. ‘Form criticism’ is the analysis of individual passages (called pericopes), to determine their origin, development and use. ‘Redaction criticism’ is the study of the theology and compositional habits of the evangelists... The first three of these are mutually interdependent and mutually useful for understanding (1) the historical Jesus; (2) the earliest forms of Christianity; (3) the theology of the evangelists.” E.P. Sanders and Margaret Davies (Studying the Synoptic Gospels (Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1996), 46-47. Craig Evans writes: “Third Quest scholarship may not be as skeptical as new Quest scholars or their predecessors, but it is critical, perhaps even more critical, in that it has rejected certain questionable assumptions and conclusions held and promoted by form critics. Among these is the assumption that the early Church freely invented sayings of Jesus, or that certain laws govern the development and transmission of oral traditions.” Craig A. Evans, *Jesus And His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2001), 10. Craig Blomberg, too, warns of the interdependence of such criticisms, when he writes: “Many redaction-critical studies build on the unjustified assumptions of more radical form criticism. Redaction criticism by itself is inherently more reassuring than form criticism. It gives one greater confidence in the gospel writers to realize that the differences among them were deliberately introduced for rational, identifiable reasons- to stress one facet of Jesus’ character and ministry instead of another-rather than being simply the unfortunate end-product of an oral tradition that inevitably made mistakes in transmission. But the greater confidence evaporates if the redaction critic accepts the theory of an unreliable tradition and then assumes that the four evangelists introduced further changes. Like the example of the man who found himself possessed by eight demons, instead of one, the last state becomes worse than the first (Luke 11:24-26).” Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, 11.

²⁰ In the Third Quest, the disagreement still runs deep. One thinks of the difference between Burton L. Mack and his radical book in 1988 *Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* and say, that of James D.G. Dunn recently in his book *Jesus remembered*.

²¹ For a helpful model of such an approach, see: Paula Fredrikson, *Jesus of Nazareth King Of The Jews*. Unfortunately, Fredrikson ends up in the desperation of Schweitzer, of whom she early critiques in her book but of whom she inevitably regresses. In her final page she writes: “The task of the current quest for the historical Jesus is fundamentally different; and its points of principle distinguish it from theology both ancient and modern. A theological construction of Jesus can appropriately strive to relate this foundational figure to the concerns and customs of the modern believing community... The goal of that effort is to find what Jesus means to those who gather in his name, within that church. But a historical construction of Jesus looks for what Jesus meant to those who followed him in their own lifetimes, and his. It in principle works in the opposite direction, not pulling Jesus into a modern context but placing him, as coherently and compellingly as possible, in his own. Such an effort must respect the distance between now and then, between his concerns and commitments and ours. The historical Jesus of Nazareth was never and can never be our contemporary. To drape him in garments borrowed from current agendas while asserting that these agendas were actually his own only distorts and so obscures who he was. If modern believers seek a Jesus who is orally intelligible and religiously relevant, then it is to them that the necessary work of creative and responsible reinterpretation falls. Such a project is not historical (the critical construction of an ancient figure) but theological (the generation of contemporary meaning within particular religious communities).

And, with Jesus firmly planted in first-century Palestinian soil, many can see the gospel accounts as highly credible depictions of a Jewish man, who did a number of things the Gospels attest to. That is, Jesus: preached the message of the kingdom, amplified John the Baptist's repentance call, healed and welcomed outcasts, lived under both Roman procurator and client-ruler, was despised by the religious temple state authorities, and was eventually sentenced to crucifixion. This is the man, Jesus of Nazareth.²²

Multiple and conflicting theological claims inevitably arise, as various as the different communities that stand behind them. But this theological reinterpretation should neither be mistaken for, nor presented as, historical description. To regard Jesus historical require releasing him from service to modern concerns or confessional identity. It means respecting his integrity as an actual person, as subject to passionate conviction and unintended consequences, as surprised by turns of events and as innocent of the future as is anyone else. It means allowing him the irreducible otherness of his own antiquity, the strangeness Schweitzer captured in his poetic description: 'He who comes to us as One unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lakeside'. It is when we renounce the false familiarity proffered by the dark angels of Relevance and Anachronism that we see Jesus, his contemporaries, and perhaps even ourselves, more clearly in our common humanity." 270.

²² Concerning the amount of data/facts that most scholars in general accept concerning the person and life of Jesus is an interesting study and many today see an expanse in the facts one can safely suppose regarding Jesus of Nazareth. Paula Fredrickson writes: "Do we have a polestar, then, by which we might navigate our way through this confusion? I think we do. Though the word is unfashionable in academic history right now, I shall breathe it anyway: We have facts. Facts about Jesus, and facts about the movement that formed after his crucifixion. Facts are always subject to interpretation- that's part of the fun- but they also exist as fixed points in our investigation. Any explanation, any reconstruction of Jesus' mission and message must speak adequately to what we know to have been the case. If it cannot, then no matter how elegant an application of interesting methods or how rousing and appealing its moral message, that reconstruction fails as history... So let's put our facts up front in order to begin our search here. What do we know about Jesus of Nazareth, and how do these facts enable us to start out on the road to a solid and plausible historical portrait of Him? The single most solid fact about Jesus' life is his death: he was executed by the Roman Prefect Pilate, on or around Passover, in the manner reserved particularly for political insurrectionists, namely, crucifixion." Paula Fredrikson, *Jesus of Nazareth*. However, in his book, William R. Herzog II discusses the issue of facts as interpretive grids, not necessarily yielding affirmative orthodox beliefs but rather engendering an interpretation of those facts, which often coalesces with ones prior commitments and perceptions. Herzog, after evaluating the 13 facts which E.P. Sanders accepts regarding Jesus, writes: "Once again, facts can accommodate a variety of interpretations, depending on the larger interpretive framework in which they are placed. Any reconstruction of the historical Jesus must remain cognizant of the dialogical and dialectical relationship between facts and their interpretive frameworks. In other words, simply compiling facts about Jesus produces minimal results and creates far more questions than the facts themselves can answer as well as more confusion than clarity. This might be why Meier rightly notes that the historical Jesus is not 'the real Jesus'. The real Jesus is the full reality of the historical person only a vestige of which can be captured through historical inquiry and investigation. This means quite simply that 'the real Jesus is not available and never will be', a forceful reminder of one of the inevitable and inescapable conditions of historical research..." William R. Herzog II, *Prophet and Teacher*, 5-6. Going on in this analysis, Herzog contrasts two approaches to the dilemma facing any historical Jesus scholar, juxtaposing Luke Timothy Johnson and John Dominic Crossan. Johnson finds the enterprise of studying Jesus as abstracted from the narrative framework of the gospels as misguided and self-destructive (as the only interpretive grid and meaning we have of Jesus is found in the gospels which are destructively

The Third Quest with its commitment to the first century had produced not only a devotion to ancient materials (Josephus, Dead Sea Scrolls, Rabbinic Literature, etc.)²³ but also a growing desire to research Jesus in this Judaistic context (thus placing him squarely in his setting and finding the similarities as evincing authenticity).²⁴ Scholars are

rearranged and compartmentalized by many scholars in pursuing the 'real Jesus'). In other words, the modern interpreter of Jesus destructively advances in his/her knowledge and analysis of Jesus, but only in destroying the narrative framework and interpretive grid that gives meaning and substance to Jesus (i.e. the interpreter becomes the 'gospel' writer). Crossan, instead, demands that the study of Jesus must be undertaken in each age, even though its knowledge will always be approximate and progressively improved upon. Crossan determines to do so for his own generation through utilizing a three layer approach to the gospels: a 'triadic' method, which employs research at the macrocosmic level (using cultural-anthropological studies and those of first-century Palestine), the mesocosmic (using historical works of today discussing Palestine as well as ancient literature at that time) and the microcosmic level (using the relevant texts, the gospels in this instance, and analyzing them closely). See Herzog pgs 8-11, 39-42, and especially: John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (New York: Harper SanFrancisco, 1991), xxvii-xxxiv.

²³ Paul V. M. Flesher writes about just one of these resources, the Targum: "The *targumim*, with their emphasis on translation and interpretation, provide modern scholars with a window into the theological and mythic world of the Jews who wrote them, who read them in the schools, and who read them aloud in the synagogue. Targums shed light not on just one group of Jews, but on many different groups, for targums were written and used by Jews living in Palestine, Egypt, Syria and Babylonia; they were composed as early as the second century B.C.E. and as late as the medieval period. Despite their obvious value for the religious history of Judaism, the targums remain an under-utilized source; scholars of Second-Temple Judaism, Rabbinic Judaism, and early Christianity have only begun to delve into them. These 'beginnings' have generated much new and exciting research." Pg. 40-41. Paul V.M. Flesher "The Targumim" pg. 71. Ed. Jacob Neusner, *Judaism In Late Antiquity: The Literary and Archaeological Sources*, Part One (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2001).

²⁴ Of course, there must be a balance of these two criteria, and these shall be discussed in detail later. Too much dissimilarity and Jesus becomes an enigma to his own time, his Jewishness marginalized and we discount all the relevant materials the place him squarely in that context. Too much similarity and Jesus loses all relevance to interact and transform society in his day through creativity and brave new proposal. Dunn places Crossan and Mack in the former category of danger, and Geza Vermes and E.P. Sanders in the latter, James D.G. Dunn, *A New Perspective On Jesus*, 62, 64. N.T. Wright also adds: "The first question (together with the second, which sharpens it to a point) arises naturally from the whole movement of historical investigation of Jesus. If he belongs anywhere in history, it is within the history of first-century Judaism. But how does he belong there? Was he a typical Jew, really quite remarkable? Or, at the opposite extreme, was he so totally different that he stood out completely, following an entirely different set of aims, obedient to a different vision of reality? Or, if we renounce these two extreme, did he share the perspective of his people to a large extent, adjusting it only at a few points (however significant) here and there? Or did he have a major programme for reform? ... First, we can put Jesus so thoroughly within his context as almost to camouflage him into invisibility. Thus we have Jesus the thoroughly Jewish wandering Hasid (Vermes) and Jesus the Jewish revolutionary (Brandon). Second, we can put him at the other extreme, and minimize his Jewishness (thus moving beyond the boundaries of the Third Quest). Thus we have Jesus the preacher of timeless (and non-Jewish) truths (Bultmann), or Jesus the Cynic (Downing, Mack, and much of the Jesus Seminar)." N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 91. Wright offers a healthy corrective to extremes: "Perhaps the most important thing that this new movement of scholarship has done is to alert us to the fact that to make Jesus a first-century Palestinian Jew does not necessarily mean that he will be, so to speak, recognizably 'Jewish' through and through. We no longer think (or at least we should no longer think) of Palestine in this period as encircled with an invisible steel curtain that kept out ideas and

thus utilizing and interacting with resources available, and finding great productivity. Jesus scholar, Graham Stanton, notes the delightful situation today for students and scholars alike studying the life of Jesus. Concerning the region of Galilee, Stanton writes: “We now know far more about the economic, ethnic, and political make-up of pre-AD 70 Galilee than we knew even twenty years ago.”²⁵ It is not only extra-biblical research that is producing positive results and developing the Third Quest. Craig Evans notes that now, the Gospels are being reevaluated and appreciated for their genuine worth: “...Jesus research in recent years has reflected a greater optimism that the Gospels

influences that were circulating in the ancient near east in general. It may be that, when scholarship has got over the determination to make Jesus as apparently ‘Jewish’ as possible, it may have to weave in other factors as well.” 74. Against the over-tendency among scholars to countenance dissimilarity (and presuppose the sharp dichotomy between the historic Jesus and that of the Jesus of faith), Grant Osborne writes: “... too little allowance is made for the creative genius of Jesus and too much accent is given to the creative function of the Church. In fact there is good evidence for a radical continuity between the historical Jesus and the Church’s proclamation, and we must deny the artificial reconstruction of many scholars... Only the fact that Jesus had left an indelible imprint on his disciples can account for the power and message of the Church.” Pg 120, 121 Grant R. Osborne “The Evangelical and Traditionsgeschichte” JETS 21/2 (June 1978): 117-130.

²⁵ Graham Stanton, *The Gospels and Jesus*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 162. It is precisely here, in the issue of Jesus and his similarity to Judaism, that an essential defining characteristic is met between the ‘New Quest’ and that of members of the ‘Third Quest’ who wish to remove themselves from Kasemann’s criterion of double dissimilarity. Unfortunately, such zeal to place Jesus within his context, and thus evince authenticity when Jesus and first-century Palestine are convergent, is also met with numerous difficulties when pressed to far into service. What happens once a unique characteristic of Jesus is met with in the Gospels? How do we handle unique and curious features of Jesus? Tom Holmen notes the difficulties well: “...the view that Jesus did not come up with anything original seems strange indeed. Is it not strange that in the midst of stressing the formative and innovative character of the Jewish matrix of Jesus and given that this matrix consists of competing factions with contradictory agendas and clashing views on various matters, Jesus is pictured as having been at variance with nothing? Quite conspicuously, scholars who keep insisting that there was no such thing as ‘mainstream’ or ‘common’ Judaism, hurry up to picture Jesus as a representative of just that. This is exactly what is brought about by the categorical denial of picturing Jesus as a ‘different Jew’. For if one realizes ‘the total impossibility of any type of closed, systematic, normative Judaism’, how is it possible to characterize Jesus as a ‘normal Jew’ (where ‘normal’ is taken as opposite to ‘different’)? As a matter of fact, here Jesus is again made into a special case, only in a manner and with an ensuing argument different from those of the New Quest... The New Quest was certainly wrong in detaching Jesus from Judaism, it, too, partly in accordance with certain methodological solutions (cf. Kasemann’s criterion). Still, such ‘emphasis’ on the Jewishness of Jesus which denies Jesus (and *particularly* Jesus) any traits of originality makes one suspect the approaches of being engaged in compensating for the tendencies of the New Quest... But the goal pursued by such an approach-equating Jesus and Judaism- can also be reached by making Judaism look like Jesus. Indeed, it sometimes seems that one is attempting to force the contemporary thoughts to equate with those of Jesus in order to prevent Judaism from appearing in what might be conceived as an unfavorable light. Thus it is Judaism which is apologized for.” 181, 182. Tom Holmen, “A Theologically Disinterested Quest? On the Origins of the ‘Third Quest’ for the Historical Jesus” *Studia Theologica* 55, (no. 2, 2001): 175-197.

can yield the data necessary for an intelligible reconstruction of the ministry of Jesus. This is seen in the fact that virtually all of these works make historically plausible suggestions as to how Jesus understood himself and his mission, things that Bultmann and others a generation ago thought beyond reach.”²⁶ Even as early as 1985 E.P. Sanders could write: “The dominant view today seems to be that we can know pretty well what Jesus was out to accomplish, that we know a lot about what he said, and that those things make sense within the world of first-century Judaism.”²⁷ Such a perspective seeks to provide a comprehensive hypothesis that takes into account all of the relevant material, most notably, the motivation for Jesus’ death, the church movement proceeding him, Jesus’ own goals, a renewed understanding of eschatology, etc. As shall be evident, however, it is not necessarily the divulging of new or growing research surrounding Jesus of Nazareth’s life and first-century Palestine, but the resultant assessment of such

²⁶ Craig A. Evans, *Jesus And His Contemporaries*, 2-3. N.T. Wright adds: “If today there is a new wave of historical seriousness about Jesus, there is also a new sense, well beyond what the early redaction-criticism envisaged that the gospels are to be seen as texts, works of literary art, in their own right. This has sometimes misled scholars into supposing that they are therefore of less historical value. However, there are signs that a more mature approach is beginning to emerge. It is becoming apparent that the authors of at least the synoptic gospels, which still provide the bulk of the relevant source material, intended to write about Jesus, not just about their own churches and theology, and that they substantially succeeded in this intention. The attempt to set Jesus credibly within his historical context, then, is once again widely regarded as a reputable scholarly task. Within this, the Third Quest can claim certain advantages. First, it takes the total Jewish background extremely seriously. Second, its practitioners have no united theological or political agenda, unlike the monochrome New Quest and its fairly monochrome renewal; the diverse backgrounds of the scholars involved serve to provide checks and balances, so that one scholar’s reading of a particular passage (say) Josephus is balanced by another’s, and a measure of critical realism is both possible and increasingly actual. Third, there has increasingly been a sense of honing in on the key questions which have to be asked if we are to make progress.” N.T. Wright *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 89. Jurgen Becker says much the same: “There is an increasingly positive attitude today about the trustworthiness of the synoptic tradition, especially when compared to the early days of Form Criticism. This change is due in part to the fact that today we recognize two false judgments that earlier fed historical skepticism: the assumption that only ideally formed, simple traditions can be original, and an exaggerated view of the creative power of the church to which everything was attributed at the slightest suspicion that something might not be authentic.” Becker adds that today, there must be a proper balance between trust and skepticism, and that it must be done on a trial basis for each account. Jurgen Becker, *Jesus of Nazareth*, translated by James E. Crouch (Walter De Gruyter: New York, 1998), 15.

²⁷ E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 2.

material that marks notable divergence of opinion over Jesus of Nazareth: his person and mission.²⁸

²⁸ See: Mark Allen Powell *Jesus as a figure in History: How Modern Historians View the Man from Galilee*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998). It must be noted, that among the Third Questers, there is quite a divergent approach to Jesus' essence: that of a social prophet (Horsley), a charismatic Jew (Vermees) a prophet calling Israel to return from exile (Wright), a magician (Morton Smith), cynic philosopher (Burton Mack), and Jesus the sage (Ben Witherington). "New methods complicate our efforts in other ways. Their very variety undermines any possibility of consensus about how to proceed; their respective orientations guarantee often disparate results. Do we emphasize political and economic theories on the organization of aristocratic empires? Then, unsurprisingly, we end up with a Jesus whose program addresses these economic and political problems, the inequalities of power, that such empires analyzed in this way are seen to embody and express. Do we look to anthropological studies of shamans in other cultures to understand spontaneous healings in first-century rural Palestine? Then we will analyze the Gospel's accounts of Jesus as exorcist and healer accordingly. Do we use literary methods to refract the evangelical narratives into the layers that we consider the most ancient, and concentrate our efforts solely on those? If we argue that the earliest layer is sayings rather than story, word rather than deed, we will naturally conclude that Jesus was primarily a teacher. Our efforts then will turn to understanding what he taught, not what he did, since his actions (healings, for example, or exorcisms, or the scene in the temple) are communicated not in sayings but in story. Narrative on this reading inevitably recedes in importance as primary evidence. In sum: Once method determines our perspective on our sources, how we see is really what we get." Paula Fredrikson *Jesus of Nazareth King Of The Jews*, 6-7. On the issue of disagreement among Third Questers over the nature of Jesus and his mission, one example will suffice. Regarding Jesus as an apocalyptic teacher/prophet, though many are agreed upon this important aspect of Jesus (and here Wright sees the positive nature of Schweitzer's legacy), there is a world of difference say, between N. T. Wright and Bart Ehrman, even though both hold to the belief that Jesus in some manner was an apocalyptic teacher. See chapter eight: Bart D. Ehrman, *Jesus: apocalyptic prophet of the new millennium*. Paul Barnett tames initial excitement over the Third Quest by writing: "It is an interesting coincidence that the closing decades of the nineteenth century also witnessed a spate of books on Jesus, many of them idealistic and romantic in character, reflecting the spirit of the age. The current Jesus reconstructions are also idealistic, but are shaped more by the values of late-second-millennium political correctness. The Jesus of the 'third quest', as they are called, often looks remarkably like the scholars who write about him: postmodern, ideologically reformist and eminently reasonable." Pg 17. Paul Barnett, *Jesus and the Logic of History* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 1997). At this point, it might be helpful to reflect on the fact that different portraits of Jesus do not necessarily come from anti-theological or atheistic charges. If one finds in Jesus a 'cynic sage' debriefed of many marks of divinity which we would normally ascribe to him, we should at the very least abstain from caricature or defaming such efforts. Concerning Crossan and Borg's portraits of Jesus, whom evangelicals in general oppose, Michael E. O'Keeffe offers this interesting insight: "Like Crossan, Borg's aim is to uncover a 'pre-Easter Jesus' that will renew our faith, both in God and in the Christian community that is given responsibility for bearing witness to the Spirit of God. Far from merely an academic exercise or even worse a publicity stunt, both authors are convinced that their efforts to recover the historical Jesus will renew personal and corporate life, beginning with the church and ending with all life." 190. Michael E. O'Keeffe "Searching For The Historical Jesus: Examining The Work Of John Dominic Crossan And Marcus Borg" *Horizons* 24 (Fall 1997): 175-192. We might disagree with their teleology and presentation, but it does not good to disparage someone's research from the start as being deviant or motivated for ill. In like manner, an interesting case about Rudolph Bultmann is presented by David H.C. Read. He writes: "I remembered a later period when I shared a plate of spaghetti, cooked by Rudolph Bultmann, while he explained to me that his controversial 'demythologizing' was ultimately motivated by a passionate desire to evangelize this generation." David H.C. Read "What's So Great About Jesus" *The Living Pulpit* (Jan-March, 1994): 6-7.

This is not to deny, however, the ongoing discussion amongst the Third Questers as to methodologies and criteria.²⁹ There is the continual debate as to correlating similarity and dissimilarity as criteria of explanation, but alongside it remains the steady resolve for the methodology of coherence: what hypothesis best accounts for all the facts (his life, message and death at Roman hands). So, a major undertaking of many Third Questers has been to discuss and consider what might be called the ‘plausibility factor’ (also called the criteria of rejection/execution). As shall be evident, this aspect of Jesus research seeks to account for Jesus’ life and his death through best explaining why he was rejected by the religious leaders, what charge instigated his how he died at the hands of Romans, and lastly, how did Jesus’ person and mission provide the impetus for Christianity.³⁰

²⁹ Stanley Porter analyzes the contributions and deficiencies of several scholars as related to the issue of criteria. Stanley E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research*, 104-123.

³⁰ N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 90. James D.G. Dunn writes: “An inescapable starting point for any quest for Jesus should be the historical fact that Jesus made a lasting impact on his disciples...the effect he had on them in due course gave us the accounts of Jesus in the Gospels. The impact was not a slight one- a memorable epigram, a good story, or an exciting event that caught their attention for a day or two and then sank below the surface of their everyday consciousness. His mission changed their lives. They became disciples. They gave up their jobs. They left their families. They committed themselves to him, to follow him. They were in his company day after day for many months. The impact of his mission turned their lives in a completely new direction; it lasted.” James D.G. Dunn *A New Perspective On Jesus*, 22, 23. Also see: D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* 58, 62-63. In discussing plausibility (and rejection/execution) Dennis Ingolfsland accordingly refutes Bart Erhman’s portrait of Jesus and his death. Ingolfsland writes: “According to Ehrman the Jewish leaders arranged Jesus’ execution because he taught that they would be the recipients of God’s judgment. But just predicting God’s judgment on the temple establishment does not seem to have been sufficient reason in itself for his execution, since the Essenes, too, threatened the temple establishment with God’s judgment. Besides, Erhman’s view does not explain the tradition that Jesus was charged with blasphemy. A more historically probable explanation for Jesus’ death is that he presented himself as the fulfillment of the Jewish prophecies about God coming to His people as their Shepherd and King.” Pg 194, Dennis Ingolfsland, “An Evaluation of Bart Erhman’s ‘Historical Jesus’” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158 (April-June 2001): 181-197. Paula Fredrikson writes: “The problem of linking Jesus’ Jewish career with his Roman death challenges many, and extremely diverse, modern reconstructions of Jesus and his message. The more Jesus is imagined as a teacher whose message- be it the witty subversive aphorisms of the wandering Jewish Cynic, the existential ethics of a pious Hasid, or the antinationalist, anti-Temple proclamation of the Galilean visionary- essentially challenges Jewish religious authorities, the harder it is to explain Pilate’s role...Jesus’ cross is a stumbling block for all these reconstructions....Had Rome, mistakenly or not, truly though that Jesus posed any sort of political threat, more than only Jesus would have died. Pilate never could have risked or tolerated the existence of what he would suppose a revolutionary group. Further, the earliest Christian evidence, Paul’s letters, written mid-century, depict the disciples as ensconced comfortably in Jerusalem, directing a Mediterranean-wide mission without the slightest hint of constraint from Rome –or, for that matter, from Jerusalem’s priestly hierarchy. Clearly,

But how do scholars today arrive at conclusions regarding the historical Jesus? Obviously, there is no one Jesus scholar commanding consent, and among popular culture there are perhaps more perceptions of Jesus today (as to his nature and mission), than among those waving palm branches on the day of his triumphal entry. Nevertheless, serious Jesus research demands submitting to the strictures of historical scholarship. That is, historical research requires criteria to evaluate and adjudicate various portraits of Jesus of Nazareth. It is these that provide a safeguard against arbitrary constructions.

Criteria and methodologies in historical research

As mentioned previous, various scholars understand Jesus through various, and sometimes competing and alternate methodologies. This section will introduce tools generally employed in current Jesus research, some of which will prove germane to the Markan triumphal narrative.³¹

nobody in power was much worried by this movement. Why then did its leader die the way he did? This is a crucial anomaly...” Paula Fredrikson, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 8, 9.

³¹ For a helpful introduction to several criteria employed in the Jesus quest, there are many helpful resources. Below are listed quite a few helpful books and some of the methodologies discussed therein. See: John P. Meier ‘Criteria: How Do We Decide What Comes From Jesus?’ in: *The Historical Jesus in Recent Research*, ed. James D.G. Dunn and Scot McKnight (Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 123-144. William Herzog describes his understanding of a promising evaluation of criteria as developed by Dennis Polkow. Here, there are three levels: 1. Preliminary (ascertained through discounting redaction work and tradition work), 2. Primary (using methodologies of dissimilarity, coherence and multiple attestation), 3. Secondary (Palestine context, written style and scholarly agreement). See William R. Herzog II, *Prophet and Teacher*, 35. Even here, however, Herzog aptly notes the difficulty: “The criteria for authenticity may be helpful tools for sifting and sorting materials of the Jesus tradition. They are not objective criteria, and they all involve circular reasoning. We need to make assumptions to govern our inquiry, and without hypotheses we have no longer framework for facts and information. This means that the criteria are not guides for inductive or empirical research on the Jesus traditions, but they encourage us to ask questions about these materials and subject them to scrutiny. That the criteria have limited value does not mean they are without value. They are part of a larger task.” Pg 39. For a concise and useful critique of several criteria, see: David Catchpole, *Jesus People*, 57-60. Craig Evans also nicely summarizes the helpful (and sometimes dubious) criteria of the Third Quest: (1) historical coherence (2) Multiple attestation (3) embarrassment (4) dissimilarity (5) Semitisms and Palestinian context (6) coherence (differing from the first, as here being that of consistency- the message of Christ belonging to his overall framework, wherein the first criteria seeks to answer the link between Jesus, his death, and his subsequent followers after his death, all in a coherent manner and with some type of explanatory power). Craig A. Evans, *Jesus And His Contemporaries*, 13-26. Evans’ book is interesting in that it seeks especially to supply the ‘links’ between

There are few things in life as impressive as the marvel of finely-crafted furniture. Beyond the simply beauty of form and features, the skilled craftsman understands that each type of wood has its own distinctive qualities. When properly exploited, the finished furniture is not only structurally sound, but glows. With every bend and turn, the grain is revealed to a vibrant degree. The conscious observer knows that this is more than simply form and function; it is a precious piece of art. In many ways, fine furniture is like historical Jesus research. Like fine species of wood for the craftsman, there must be some material for the scholar to begin their craft. Like chisels in the craftsman's' pouch, the scholar must also have tools; that is, critical criteria with which to work upon the relevant material. It is the material and tools which ultimately provide a proper framework and analysis of the Markan triumphal. To these we now turn.

Sources

Jesus ministry in Galilee and his death in Judea (how the first led to the second). See chapters 7-12. Bart Ehrman nicely summarizes several criteria which the historian would like to have and pursue, calling it the 'historian's wish list' he cites several clear criteria: "... an ideal situation would have to be sources that (a) are numerous, so that they can be compared to one another (the more the better!); (b) derive from a time near the event itself, so that they were less likely to have been based on hearsay of legend; (c) were produced independently of one another, so that their authors were not in collusion; (d) do not contradict one another, so that one or more of them is not necessarily in error; (e) are internally consistent, so that they show a basic concern for reliability, and (f) are not biased toward the subject matter, so that they have not skewed their accounts to serve their own purposes." Bart D. Ehrman, *Jesus: apocalyptic prophet of the new millennium*, 85-86. Of course, the last supposition over sources is one that is perhaps most questionable and displays the constant disjunction between faith and history (someone with a bias cannot be expected to approximate the truth). He states thus: "... a second rule of thumb that historians follow: accounts of Jesus that are clearly imbued with a highly developed theology are less likely to be historically accurate. The reason relates to our first rule of thumb: later sources tend to be more theologically oriented than earlier ones, since the greater passage of time has allowed greater sustained theological reflection." Pg. 88-89. Unfortunately, Ehrman make Jesus out to be something of a theological dote or sloth (Jesus could not have been intensely theological!). Ehrman often refers to this highly questionable standard. See: Barth D. Ehrman, *The Last Gospel of Judas Iscariot: A New Look at Betrayer and Betrayed* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 33-34, 131, 133-134, 146-147, 177-179. Stanley Porter usefully also charts the various criteria used. See Stanley E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research*, 102. E.P. Sanders and Margaret Davies list the following criteria: (1) cross-examination (what 'cuts against the grain of Christian belief or doctrine), (2) dissimilarity (or, the criterion of double dissimilarity), (3) Multiple attestation, (4) perceiving Jesus through eyes of friends and enemies. E.P. Sanders and Margaret Davies, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels*, 304-333.

Scholars, as noted above, must have some material to evaluate. They must have some substantial material that provides them with the ability to negotiate historical dissonance which ultimately serves to provide an interpretive grid by which to assess individuals and events in history. Thus, the use of *sources*, is of preliminary concern for Jesus research.³² The foundation of all historical predication must begin its task responsibly here. The issue of sources, of course, is a major presupposition to the various criteria to be discussed. That is, it provides the backbone or foundational material for individual scholars as they seek to reconstruct the life of Jesus and do so from ancient documents which they deem most acceptable or authentic to the person of Jesus.³³ Under this rubric, scholars continually debate the relative worth of ancient documents,

³² The historian, of course, must sift through a wealth of sources surrounding Jesus, but only a limited few are of immediate and relevant importance for understanding Jesus' context and person. Thus, though Josephus' writings, the New Testament writings, the Dead Sea Scrolls provide helpful windows for the historian, the usage of other sources must go on cautiously (such as the Mishnah, Targumim and Talmudim- all later than the time of Jesus, post-dating the fall of Jerusalem, and representing a very different Judaism than that of the time of Christ with its distinct parties and variegated perspectives on the Romans, God's will, the Torah, Temple, etc.). As is obvious, writings closest to the event in consideration naturally accord the highest degree of strength for the historian. Other factors in determining the relative worth of sources include: intended audience and purpose, genre, and the perspective and competence of the writer). For those comprising Jesus Seminar, some see the Gospel of Thomas as a viable source for accurate research, on equal ground with the canonical Gospels (Crossan treats it the primary source). Others ignore the Gnostic Gospels as evidencing little help in study (Sanders and Meier). Paul Barnett writes of those who employ the *Gospel of Thomas* in significant degree: "...the use of the non-canonical or apocryphal gospels, in particular the *Gospel of Thomas* (for instance, by Koester and Crossan) is problematic. Historical method requires that all the sources be considered, with due weight given to early and underived sources. The Gospel of Thomas was written in the second century in Egypt, in a non-Palestinian religious ethos which is overtly Gnostic. Whatever traces of Jesus' words and actions may be recovered in the *Gospel of Thomas*, this work is removed from the world of Jesus by a considerable passage of time and by the religious culture of a different country. The *Muratorian Canon* and the *Anti-Marcionite Prologues*, which belong to the second century, speak of a fourfold gospel canon, and specifically exclude other gospels from the church's canon. Tatian (c. AD 170) combined the four gospels into one corpus. Its title *Diatessaron* ('through four') significantly points to the early fixity of four gospels. Yet Koester and Crossan depend on later and rejected works like the *Gospel of Thomas* while making minimal use of the canonical gospels." Paul Barnett, *Jesus and the Logic of History*, 26. Further divide among scholars in utilizing the New Testament is found commonly in treatments of Mark or John, and including or rejecting Paul in such discussions.

³³ Jurgen Becker writes: "In the hands of an interpreter, texts are rather defenseless creatures. When gospel texts, separated from their traditional liturgical use, were exposed to the interpretive power of historical reasoning, the attack on them was unrestrained, often naïve, and to seldom sensitive. That interpreters must exert some self-control and must pay special attention to the foreign and unique dimensions of the text before using it for their own purposes was a lesson that we first had to learn and that continually we must learn anew." Jurgen Becker, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 3.

according to date, author, purpose and other issues. In the nature of the case, though Christ lived approximately two thousand years ago, scholars do have access to an assortment of sources to which they can glean information on the person of Jesus and his followers. Moreover, sources need not be ancient, but may include, contemporary resources such as archaeology, literary analysis (narrative criticism, linguistic analysis of Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek, etc.), and social sciences (cultural studies such as anthropology, socio-economic models, etc.). In all of these studies, one is provided with a valuable means of unlocking aspects of first-century Palestine, and specifically, Jesus of Nazareth. It is here, moreover, that some of the greatest divergence of opinion originates.³⁴ Here then is the wood upon which the historians craft is applied.

³⁴Paula Fredrikson provides this caution: “New methods complicate our efforts in other ways. Their very variety undermines any possibility of consensus about how to proceed; their respective orientations guarantee often disparate results. Do we emphasize political and economic theories on the organization of aristocratic empires? Then, unsurprisingly, we end up with a Jesus whose program addresses these economic and political problems, the inequalities of power, that such empires analyzed in this way are seen to embody and express. Do we look to anthropological studies of shamans in other cultures to understand spontaneous healings in first-century rural Palestine? Then we will analyze the Gospel’s accounts of Jesus as exorcist and healer accordingly. Do we use literary methods to refract the evangelical narratives into the layers that we consider the most ancient, and concentrate our efforts solely on those? If we argue that the earliest layer is sayings rather than story, word rather than deed, we will naturally conclude that Jesus was primarily a teacher. Our efforts then will turn to understanding what he taught, not what he did, since his actions (healings, for example, or exorcisms, or the scene in the temple) are communicated not in sayings but in story. Narrative on this reading inevitably recedes in importance as primary evidence. In sum: Once method determines our perspective on our sources, how we see is really what we get.”³⁴ Paula Fredrikson, *Jesus of Nazareth King Of The Jews*, 6, 7. Others, such as Richard Horsley construct their general approach around the thesis that new information concerning Palestine (particularly Galilee) is quite welcome, but with it must come new paradigms for understanding Judaism that have long been shackled under the reigning and false Christian paradigm. Thus, he writes: “Previous understanding of Galilee was ill-prepared for this sudden revival of interest and information. In the general cultural as well as academic division of labor, Galilee belonged to a largely Christian biblical studies and the parallel period of Jewish studies... Thus Galilee was understood in the context of a grand scheme of Christian origins. It was not until a transference was made from insights into the history of science that we came to recognize that ancient Galilee, like ancient Judaism generally, was constructed as part of a dominant historical ‘paradigm’ that defined the key issues and legitimate interpretations of biblical and other studies of the origins of Christianity... In a number of its key aspects this paradigm has been challenged as inappropriate or even counter to the literary and, more recently, the archaeological evidence from antiquity.” Richard A. Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Pres International, 1995), 1, 2, 4. Horsley goes on to note several aspects of this revolution of the dominant paradigm (regarding such issues as the presence of zealots, synagogues, and, more generally, Judaism as respondent to Hellenism and equally offensive to Christian sensibilities and the teachings of Jesus). What is important to note, however,

General Criteria Utilized

Beyond the primary issue of sources, scholars today utilize several criteria for assessing plausible portraits of Jesus of Nazareth.³⁵ Here, the historian measures the relative weight and authenticity of given sources and Gospel texts surrounding Jesus through various means. Once the historian has gathered all pertinent channels by which to access a reconstruction, an assimilation is not immediate, but calls for an evaluation. Thus, pertinent data must be assessed as to its relative merit toward producing an authentic and credible reconstruction. And so, it is the use of the preceding criteria and, consequently, their relative worth that effectively controls a scholar's reconstruction of the life of Jesus. That is, any scholar who wishes to assess and present claims of plausibility surrounding Jesus must do so, not according to individual whims, but the standard canons of historical investigation. It is the eye of the needle through which competent scholars seek to pass.

Here then, are several criteria which will provide the necessary foundation to a discussion of the triumphal entry. For now, we will briefly focus upon the most common criterion employed, commonly referred to as the 'criteria of authenticity'.³⁶

is that with the resurgence of interest and information in first-century Palestine, comes wide divergence of opinion and views which are not entirely congenial to preconceived Christian appropriations. Pgs. 1-15.

³⁵ Criteria is taken from Greek and simply means 'judgment' or properly extended here, to mean, the 'measure of judgment'.

³⁶ We would do well to begin here with the warning of Craig Evans: "Not only are the starting points of some scholars cramped and unjustified, their methods are often quite severe and skeptical. Some scholars seem to think that the more skeptical they are, the more critical they are. But adopting an excessive and unwarranted skeptical stance is no more critical than gullibly accepting whatever comes along. In my view, a lot of what passes for criticism is not critical at all; it is nothing more than skepticism masking itself as scholarship. This way of thinking is a major contribution to distorted portraits of Jesus and the Gospels in much of today's radical scholarship." Craig A. Evans, *Fabricating Jesus*, Pg. 46. Graham Stanton further notes the complexities involved, especially with the criterion of coherence and similarity: "In some ways we are caught in a circle as we attempt to do this. We can only make progress in our understanding of the story of Jesus by increasing our knowledge of first-century Judaism. But on my view, some of the best evidence for Judaism at the time of Jesus is found in the gospels." Graham Stanton, *The Gospels and Jesus*, 293-294. This is one reason why evangelicals immediately decry arbitrary judgments cast over the Gospels. It is not simply the faith-history disjunction that heightens the problem, but an unwarranted and arbitrary suspicion of the Gospels that is not likewise extended to other first-century sources.

The first is that of *multiple attestation*. In this criterion, scholars seek to find historically accurate statements which are more likely found in multiple witnesses. The more various sources support a single recorded event or saying, the more likely it is to be accurate.³⁷

Second, is the complex criterion of *dissimilarity*. It is also discussed popularly under the much-debated issues of *similarity/dissimilarity* (ways in which Christ was similar to his context or ways in which he was unique from it). The question is: Should the evidence and research concerning Christ focus on aspects of his life and teachings which are *similar* to first century Judaism? Or should it focus upon ways in which Jesus was *dissimilar* to his culture?³⁸ Or, one might seek to combine both approaches into a

³⁷ Most important for the historian here is to find sources without dependent relation to one another. However, even in this, N.T. Wright finds fault with the presupposition that if something is only attested to once, it is thereby nullified- serious research cannot always exist upon such meager expectations.

³⁸ Per Dissimilarity, historians search for sayings/events which are out of the context of the culture studied, which seems to give greater credence to their historical accuracy. In other words, why bother recording something significant or at all if it is simply the 'given' and norm of that society. In this light, Jesus' portrayal as God as 'Father' (*abba*) is often considered unique (though this is certainly debated) to the first-century Judaism in Jesus' strictly personal terms and therefore considered highly accurate. In this criteria, many scholars are increasingly seeking a more modest proposal of dissimilarity and seeking to show that similarity is also highly helpful and useful as well. The obvious flaw of dissimilarity is that we do not know enough about either first-century Palestine or the early church to make proper judgments as to authenticity. See also: E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Phil.: Fortress Press, 1985), 16. For a helpful discussion and critique of the criterion of dissimilarity, see: Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria*, translated, M. Eugene Boring (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002). In this last book, the authors seek to supplement the insights of dissimilarity with an emphasis upon both the individual contributions of Jesus ('contextual distinctiveness') as well as the context of his surroundings ('contextual appropriateness') which together most plausibly provide an explanation of his personhood, mission and impact. The immediate difficulty of course, with this criterion is that locating with exactitude what 'Judaism' was in Jesus' day is impossible. Rather, most now concede that it is best to speak of Judaisms. Lester L. Grabbe states to this effect, speaking of the Hellenistic influence upon the Jews: "We now realize that Judaism in the Hellenistic world was characterized by diversity- there were many Judaisms. Jews had a fierce loyalty toward the religion of their fathers and clear willingness to die, if necessary, to adhere to it. Yet the precise way in which one showed loyalty varied tremendously." Lester L. Grabbe "Hellenistic Judaism" pg. 71. Ed. Jacob Neusner, *Judaism In Late Antiquity: The Literary and Archaeological Sources*, Part One (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2001). Perhaps one might speak of Judaism effectively in light of central values and symbols: Temple, Torah, Territory, or more specifically and theologically: monotheism and election (continuingly attested by archaeological discoveries of ritual baths and purity code artifacts). Another glaring defect in this criterion is noted by Joachim Gnilka: "What is certain is that, if applied radically, a lot of Jesus material would be severed from him. Has Jesus always been original, he would resemble a missionary to China who refuses to speak Chinese." Joachim Gnilka, *Jesus of Nazareth: Message and History*, Pg. 20. Luke Timothy Johnson, in particular, is well known for

'double criterion' (N.T. Wright).³⁹ In the end, many scholars assume the criterion of dissimilarity as the ultimate starting point for further predication of Jesus.⁴⁰ As such, this criterion will be later evaluated at length.

Another important and oft-utilized criterion is that of 'embarrassment'. Sayings or events of Jesus which would tend to make the movement as a whole, the disciples, the person of Christ appear less than ideal also attest to its accuracy. In other words, why would someone invent sayings/events which serve to undermine or perhaps embarrass the very theological grid they seek to propose?

his disagreement with many currently over the nature of historical reconstruction and criteria utilized. Thus, he states: "Determining whether a tradition is 'multiply attested' is relatively easy, and my own principle of 'converging lines of evidence' is really just a version of that criteria. But the application of principles such as 'dissimilarity' (or for Meier, 'discontinuity') is extraordinarily difficult... In the strictest sense, the criterion demands what cannot be supplied, namely, a complete account of Jesus' Jewish context and a complete account of early Christian tradition, as a frame against which to measure a specific saying or event. Since the criterion cannot be applied strictly, its invocation involves a considerable amount of special pleading and guesswork. The same thing applies to the criterion of 'embarrassment'. One can readily agree in principle that the early church would be unlikely to invent something about Jesus that was offensive to it, but the application of the principle in specific instances once more demands access to early Christian sensibilities that the evidence does not allow." Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus*, 129.

³⁹ N.T. Wright's use of the criterion of double similarity and dissimilarity attempts to find what is *credible* for Jesus in his first-century Palestine context (but at the same time, somewhat distinct and revolutionary) and what is credible within the early church (but likewise not exactly the same and in some ways dissimilar). NT Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 132.

⁴⁰ Jurgen Becker writes to this effect: "It is justifiable the most generally accepted criterion; indeed, some use it exclusively. It claims a tradition as authentic Jesus material when its content is unique in two contexts, Early Judaism and Primitive Christianity, and thus can lay claim to originality in both areas. The criterion is weakened when one does not apply it consistently- that is to say, when one applies it rigorously when comparing Jesus to the later church but only timidly when comparing him to Early Judaism. The criterion also self-destructs when the demands for originality is so unrealistic that the only thing left of Jesus is a solipsistic phantom. It should go without saying that we can use this criterion only when we understand that every person is part of a historical nexus and that the individuality of Jesus that we seek to discover occurred only within the culture of Early Judaism and thus must be understood today in that context. It is also true, of course, that the early church also lives in continuity with Jesus... Thus what we are saying, albeit cautiously, is that the criterion of dissimilarity is a beginning criterion for the task at hand. Were we to stop there, doubtless we would omit much from the proclamation of Jesus that belongs top it. Once we have used this criterion to determine authentic core traditions, however, we must go further. The originality that results from the criterion of dissimilarity is never absolute; it is always found in larger contexts, which in every detail claim originality in at least some aspect." Jurgen Becker, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 13-14. Craig A. Evans explain the optimistic use of this criterion. After explaining its perils and abuses, Evans writes: "Nevertheless, the criterion does have its uses- when it is applied in a positive fashion. There is some material in the New Testament Gospels that the early church did not choose to develop as part of its theology and practice. Accordingly, it is hard to explain it as invented by the early church. The best explanation is that it derives from Jesus." Craig A. Evans, *Fabricating Jesus*, 50.

Scholars also debate the issue of whether the Gospel material concerning Jesus should be accepted a priori, *deductively* (E.P. Sanders, and Wright who allow the maximum in constructing data a priori), or whether one must begin *inductively*, gathering, scrutinizing each pericope and instance/saying of Christ as per its viability in the conceptual schema (the Jesus Seminar). Further, should the Gospels be viewed per texts in a case for simplicity (the whole account as easier to concede and begin in determining subsequent additions/revisions) or complexity (analyzing each piece as per eligibility before its overall admittance into the corpus)?⁴¹

Scholars also, such as N.T. Wright and Meier, argue explicitly for another criterion; the '*criterion of explanation*' which seeks to gather material/explanations to understand a feasible explanation for Jesus' death and the impact he had and continues to have.⁴² As noted, previous, it is this criterion which provides many a *third quester* with the confidence to chart into previously forbidden territories, unrestrained from the skeptical and salient surveillance of form and source criticism.

Other criterion utilized frequently include that of *language/environment*. Here, historian/scholars seek to analyze the accuracy of sayings/events insofar as they are reflective of that given culture and not read through the filter of alien presuppositions or other cultural contexts.⁴³ Moreover, many scholars continue to seek to find *memorable*

⁴¹ Mark Allen Powell traces this well in his: *Jesus as a figure in History*, 168-184.

⁴² Radical approaches deem the death of Jesus as an accident in history and without need for explanation, such as Burton Mack. One must come to grips with, not only the historical probability that Jesus was executed by Roman authorities and for a particular motivation, but also seek to address how the portrayal of him in the gospels warrants or implicates him in such a horrible death. Similar to this, and employed in different ways, is the criterion of Coherence which seeks to possibly allow materials previously withheld from the judgment of accuracy if they in fact contain statements/events which are entirely in keeping (cohere with) the sayings/deeds of Jesus which are considered historically accurate.

⁴³ This is quite parallel with the criterion of similarity and is where much work is done in the third quest for the historical Jesus, and where much more credence is given to the Gospel records as portraying precisely what are the concerns and influences of first-century Judaism.

content, as evidence of authenticity.⁴⁴ Even with such a brief introduction to the various criteria employed in historical Jesus research, one is immediately confronted with a host of dilemmas. Most obvious is the necessary subsequence wherein one's commitment and a priori judgments regarding the Gospels and Jesus in particular will produce the various portraits of Jesus which appear today. One cannot readily dismiss the suspicion that, inevitably, even the grand tributaries of scholarly conclusions are produced in the quiet and sometimes shallow streams of presuppositions and utilization of critical criteria.

These then are the tools of the trade.

To summarize, historians and scholar investigating the life of Jesus utilize several sources and methods. Sources include; socio-cultural sciences,⁴⁵ archaeology, ancient writings (New Testament writings; especially related to Q and the Markan priority, Josephus⁴⁶, Nag Hammadi⁴⁷, Dead Sea Scrolls⁴⁸, etc.). Methods or criteria which are

⁴⁴ Here, the most likely sayings are those which are given in easily-memorized form, such as proverbs or pithy statements. Often, unfortunately, this dismisses long discourses because of their unduly long discourse and the inability to maintain accurate transmission of those details.

⁴⁵ I am in agreement with Paul Barnett, who though appreciative of social sciences and its relation to understanding Jesus context, nevertheless sees danger in its reductionism of the individual, in this case, the uniqueness of Jesus and his originality. He writes of social sciences related to Jesus research: "To the degree to which it rests on appropriate sources, it assists in reconstructing Jesus' landscape, which in turn enhances our appreciation of him. But the reconstructed context in itself tells us little of particular individuals, whether Herod or Jesus. Great or significant figures leave their mark on account of their greatness and significance. And it is the marks of their greatness left in the sources which are to be of particular interest of historical inquiry." Paul Barnett, *Jesus and the Logic of History*, 22.

⁴⁶ Importantly, it must be noted here too, that Josephus writings' contain mention of Jesus, though adding nothing new to our knowledge of Jesus from the Gospels. The particular and highly controversial section of Josephus which mentions Jesus in detail is called the *Testimonium Flavianum*. Alice Whealy's book is helpful here, in that it traces the controversy and ends with this perceptive comment: "Twentieth century controversy over the text can be distinguished from controversy over the text in the early modern period insofar as it seems generally more academic and less sectarian.... On the one hand this can be interpreted as the result of an increasing trend towards secularism, which is usually seen as product of modernity. On the other hand it can be interpreted as a sort of post-modern disillusionment with the verities of modern skepticism, and an attempt to recapture the sensibility of the ancient world, when it apparently was still possible for a first-century Jew to have written a text as favorable towards Jesus Christ as the Testimonium Flavianum." Alice Whealy, *Josephus on Jesus: The Testimonium Flavianum Controversy from Late Antiquity to Modern Times*, Hemchand Gossai, Gen ed., Vol. 36.(New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003), 205-206.

⁴⁷ Discovered in 1945 and buried by Egyptian monks. The most popular and particularly helpful to scholars (often parallel to the Synoptics) is the Gospel of Thomas, composed of 114 sayings in Coptic.

well-known and frequently resourced today include: multiple attestation, dissimilarity, embarrassment, coherence, and plausibility structures for rejection/execution. Taken as a whole, and thoughtfully applied, Jesus scholars seek to present a portrait of Jesus today that ‘fits’ not only his historical environment, but also employ what is known today via linguistic-cultural analysis and its resultant tools.

Of course, humility and caution must be exercised in any reconstruction (whether Jesus or any other figure from the past). Objective reconstructions of the past have been chastened in favor of historical approximation and plausibility. And so, Daniel R. Schwartz summarizes this motif for the historian, which will also guide subsequent discussions of the authenticity of the Markan Triumphal Entry:

“We have seen that the task of the historian is to determine and understand what has happened in the past. Since he has no direct contact with the past, he has to make use of the various kinds of evidence by means of which past events have left traces of themselves for the historian. He has to interpret their significance and work back from them to the facts which underlie them. In doing so he has to use his skills and talents for deciphering the evidence and to draw up a creative hypothesis which will account for the information of the evidence. He has to think ‘historically’, in the sense that he has to be able to work out what human processes of thinking and action are the most probable inferences from the evidence. This task is not an easy one. There is the fact that evidence is irregularly distributed. Some areas of history have left copious evidence behind them, while others have left little or none...there is the difficulty of interpreting the evidence...There are also personal factors which may prejudice the historian’s accuracy. He may not have sufficient command of the necessary skills, he may be ignorant of vital evidence, he may allow bias to darken his judgment.”⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Discovered in 1947 near the Dead Sea and composed by a sectarian group of Essenes known as the Qumran community.

⁴⁹ Daniel R. Schwartz, *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity* (J.C.B. Mohr: Tübingen, 1992), pg. 2. For helpful discussions of the complexities of historical investigation, see: William A. Mueller, “The Problematic of Historical Research” *The Review And Expositor*, A Baptist Theological Quarterly, vol. xlvi, Jan. 1949, no.1, pgs 26-37. Also: Kai Nielsen, “Historicism” pg. 331: *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, Gen Ed. Robert Audi (Cambridge University Press: New York, 1995), Patrick Gardiner, *The Oxford Companion To History*. ed., Ted Hondrich (Oxford University Press: New York, 1995), 363, and “Historical Explanation” Rudolph H. Weingartner *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Paul Edwards, editor in chief, Vol. 4 (The Macmillan Company & The Free Press: New York, 1967). It might be useful here to briefly explain the nature of historical investigation and the reasons for historian’s humility. Philosophers of history generally discuss history under two categories: *speculative* and *critical* history. Speculative (also known as ‘substantive’) history seeks to trace the relationship of events in history, according to causality and impulse, goals and motivation. It seeks to comprehend or rationally evaluate the course of history in

light of its development, transformation and even its teleology. In 'speculative' investigation, the historian or philosopher seeks to correlate the workings of history with a thoroughgoing rational explanation of its development, thus seeking to avoid the perspective that history is inevitably purposeless, random and irrational, as it then has no meaning, no rationality and no need for explanation (in which case the work of the historian would be needless). Of course, theological explanations which perceive God as the ultimate mover and goal of history, came to be radically challenged in the Enlightenment era. Increasingly history was viewed as, though still capable of rational description, subsumed entirely under the scientific model of cause and effect, or that of natural law and scientific hypotheses, without recourse to a Divine Mind. There were others who chose to abandon a Christian teleology, but nonetheless decried against a naturalistic model wherein the human species were stripped of freedom and relegated to a mechanistic system of cause and effect. This in turn produced a dualistic world for the historian or the scientist, wherein humanity's creativity was singularly vouchsafed against the natural order of the universe. But there were many who also increasingly challenged the dualistic accounts of science versus history (or, man versus nature). By the mid-twentieth century, Carl G. Hempel sought to finally rectify the dualism by attempting to demonstrate that the historian works along the same lines as the scientist, that is, both seek to explain the natural phenomena along scientific/natural explanatives, and Hempel proposed what is known today as the 'covering law model'. In essence, it seeks to demonstrate there should be no discernable difference in method between one involved in the natural sciences and likewise in the human sciences (here, historical investigation). What Hempel attempted to show was that an event is adequately explained only after it is demonstrated that its occurrence is: (1) logically given from a set of premises which are attested statements of determining conditions (statements of conditions) and (2) logically deduced from a set of universal hypotheses (statements of general, universal laws). Here then was a model for historical explanation which sought to place historical investigation along the rigors of scientific analysis once again. In basic outline, the 'covering law model' sought to establish the harmony between science and other disciplines, and attempted to do so by formulating a model whereby the historian might work to establish certain conclusions from certain premises (for the historian, working from causal conditions in light of well-attested universal laws, toward certain events so produced). But of course, the 'covering law model' was not without a substantial number of objectors. In fact, there are several popular alternatives to the covering law model, and by no means is the debate solely between Christian teleology and strictly naturalistic explanations. In general, many historians today see the 'covering law' model as too rigid, that is, its demands are impossible to meet for any given historical explanation. We simply do not have enough information to fulfill the model's requirements (namely, a comprehensive analysis, for instance of all the laws, social interactions, and causal forces associated with any past event or movement). The lines of discussion then, often fall on the side of the strength or weakness of historical reconstructions according to probabilities and in presentations of given hypotheses. So it seems, with modernity's decline came the reciprocal questioning of logical exactitude, of dismissing strictly deductive models of reasoning and in the modest assessment that historical explanations could not hope to satisfy its discipline along scientific methods. Then too, it must be noted that today, even once strict adherents to the covering law are increasingly concerned to escape claims of deducibility and rather work within parameters of 'probabilistics'. That is, given premises one may only reasonably seek to establish what probably happens. They are but following the development Ernest Nagel and Carl Hempel, in ascertaining statistical laws over against strictly logically deduced premises. Our concern here is not to defend a particular speculative theory, but simply to demonstrate that today, historical research in its speculative branch does not quite know what to make of its own ability to trace historical events, and that it cannot hope to satisfy the requirements of scientific exactness in its explanations or reconstructions of past events. Unfortunately, without a lack of superiority for any one given speculative approach, much modern discussion by instinct largely operates 'under the radar'. Seldom will one encounter a presentation of Jesus research which provides preliminary information regarding one's approach to speculative history. But that is the rub: this issue is, in fact, vital for Jesus research. Whether it is admitted or not, each historian utilizes one of several models in speculative history, and operates under such assumptions regarding historical development, its interconnectedness, and one's ability to adequately reconstruct the past. It makes a great deal of difference if one operates under an assumption that history is random and irrational, or that it operates according to theistic assumptions (in which case the supernatural may and does occur), or that it moves along strictly mechanistic lines (with natural laws of science are dominant in analyzing the events of history and excluding the miraculous). What should be the case, then, is that historical investigations and debates surrounding Jesus of Nazareth should center upon the dominant

Criteria as Employed by John P. Meier

There are several criteria operative today which will serve to determine the degree of authenticity concerning the triumphal entry. To assist this discussion (and procure greater commonality amidst the multifarious criteria often advocated), this paper will utilize several criteria used by John P. Meier for Jesus research. These will be further utilized in discussing the authenticity of the Triumphal Entry.

John P. Meier is one of the foremost Jesus scholars today, having finished three massive volumes on Jesus of Nazareth. In his first volume, he lays various criteria which one might wish to use in reconstructing the authentic sayings and deeds of Jesus.⁵⁰ His

worldviews today, including both theism or naturalism and how these worldviews impact their own speculative approach to history. These are, after all two distinct approaches that predetermine what the historian accepts as either relevant or factual data in reconstructing the life of Jesus. More specifically, there should be a discussion of the adequacy/sufficiency of any laws and how they apply to any given framework: whether it be supernatural, natural, or skeptical (keeping in mind the Humean difficulty of establishing causation from our philosophical dilemma of being able to never assure ourselves of knowledge in general or the relation between event and causality). Acceptability and relevance in any historical theory are accounted as either dross or silver given ones ultimate presuppositions, and since this is the case, it is disheartening to hear so little about such matters. Perhaps though, this is but again another reflection of our cultural climate, with its inability to speak clearly and consistently to vital matters. And so, speculative history finds itself afloat in the winsome sea of postmodern conundrums, all of this, of course, does nothing to ensure the historian of safe and unquestioned passage.

While speculative history has declined in attention, another branch of philosophical investigation has dominated the scene, that of critical investigation. The 'critical' approach to a philosophy of history has been increasingly evaluated, and it is the highlight of historical discussions today. It is in the main, largely operative, highly discussed and intensively utilized even in Jesus research today. It seeks to provide justification for the historian, and provides a critical analysis of the tools for historical reconstruction. It is this category under which this paper operates. However, as history deals rather with non-repeatable events with the imaginative powers of humanity and in various debates of human development or randomness, critical inquiry seeks to understand and promote plausible structures for reconstructing the past and seeking to provide a rationale for the events of history. Because it has been chastened by philosophy's heavy hand (and the difficulties inherent speculative history), critical history is largely seen as a task of collecting relevant data, portraying the context appropriately, evaluating the creativity of the individual and social networks of the community, and attempting to, at last, provide an adequate account of an individuals' course of action, the link between them and their surrounding and motivating and cultural influences, and the link between their own past and that of the future their actions have created. No wonder then, that in this array of complexities, most scholars, especially those researching Jesus material, are reticent to provide an exact framework for understanding Jesus and his surroundings within a model of scientific demonstrability.

⁵⁰ John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 167-195.

analysis and usage of such criteria has been warmly appreciated by other researchers in the Third Quest.⁵¹ Meiers writes:

How can we distinguish what comes from Jesus (Stage I, roughly AD 28-30) from what was created by the oral tradition of the early Church (Stage II, roughly AD 30-70) and what was produced by the editorial work (redaction) of the evangelists (Stage III, roughly AD 70-100). All too often, popular books on Jesus pick and choose among the Gospel stories in a haphazard way, the authors deciding at any given moment that what strikes them as reasonable or plausible is therefore historical.⁵²

It is for this reason that we will briefly elucidate what Meier's considers to be the several criteria for authenticity. To begin, Meier's provides two types of criteria, primary criteria and secondary (also called dubious) criteria. In the first category he posits the following five: embarrassment, discontinuity, multiple attestation, coherence, and rejection/execution. Into the second category he places: traces of Aramaic,⁵³ Palestinian

⁵¹ So, for instance: Stanley E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research*, 105.

⁵² John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 167. Meiers is quick to add, too, that when all is said and done, and the historian is careful to apply the several criteria he lists, it is still merely a moving from possibility to probability, and that absolute certainty is strictly impossible given the nature and task of the historian. Pg 167-168. Meiers offers an interesting example of utilizing several criteria to establish that Jesus' debate with the Sadducees over the resurrection was, in fact, highly plausible and an authentic event in Jesus' life. Though it initially fails several criteria (lacks multiple attestation, and has similarity to both early Christian and Jewish contexts), Meiers weaves several criteria and judicious contextual facts ingeniously throughout the article to support his thesis of its authenticity. John P. Meier "The Debate On The Resurrection Of The Dead: An Incident From The Ministry Of The Historical Jesus?" *Journal Of The Study Of The New Testament* no. 77(Mr. 2000): 3-24. The force of Meier's arguments in support of his thesis should caution anyone against to easily dismissing a particular saying/event of Jesus simply because it 'appears' to be lacking in criteria which attest to its authenticity.

⁵³ A helpful introduction to this issue is by E.P. Sanders, pgs. 190- 255. Interestingly, even as early as 1969 with this book, Sanders countered against the persistent optimism of this criteria used by both Joachim Jeremias, Matthew Black and the then-current consensus. E.P. Sanders, *The Tendencies Of The Synoptic Traditions* Vol. 9, Gen ed., Matthew Black (New York: Cambridge Press, 1969). Sanders summarizes his study in this manner: "The results of this study, while not positive in one sense, are quite positive in another. Consideration of them should spell an end to the abuse of supposed Semitisms in efforts to prove wither antiquity or authenticity. The tendency which exists today to attribute any passage which contains a few grammatical or syntactical Semitisms to Jesus or even to the most primitive Palestinian Church is clearly misguided. Such Semitisms may be characteristic of primitive tradition, but they are also common enough in traditions which are quite late. They thus lose their character as proofs of antiquity. The use or non-use of Semitisms may, however, throw light on the redactional tendencies of certain writers as well as upon the environment in which they wrote, so that it is still profitable to study Semitisms in the Synoptic Gospels." Pg 232. Sanders says much the same in a later book: E.P. Sanders and Margaret Davies, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels*, 333-334. Too, in Sanders earlier book, he warns against form critics who rely on

environment, vividness of narration,⁵⁴ tendencies of developing tradition, and historical presumption.⁵⁵ It is helpful here, especially, to briefly examine the first five criteria Meier proposes.⁵⁶

fixed and identifiable forms to identify authenticity. Sanders uses the analogy of the stock market to portray the obvious fact that 'laws' can be broken, individually and without decisive control, and, most important, that they are general rules observed for the 'many'. In this way, Sanders cautions against the extreme optimism of form critics and others who seek to evidence authenticity according to fixed and formal rules. Pgs. 272-275. For a critique of those finding Aramaic traces in the Gospels and assuming authenticity, see also: Jurgen Becker, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 8-9.

⁵⁴ The difficulty of this criteria is that it cuts two ways and as such is inconclusive. Simply because a narrative is vivid or full of detail (such as Mark recording them sitting on green grass) does not guarantee its authenticity or antiquity. Thus, E.P. Sanders, speaking of the flexibility of transmission of the Synoptics writes to this effect: "The tradition moved in the direction of more popular forms of speech. The points which justify this generalization are several. In the first place, we should probably understand the tendency to add detail in this light. Details may well serve the purpose of adding color and thus of increasing popular interest." E.P. Sanders, *The Tendencies Of The Synoptic*, 282-283. In this book, Sanders reviews both poles of the transmission debate (Bultmann with loose and creative transmission and adaptation, and Gerhardsson/the Scandinavian school with a strict and tight transmission) and finds the truth closer to Bultmannian creativity or looseness of transmission. As Sanders writes: "Probably the truth lies between the two poles, and we would put it closer to the pole emphasizing the freedom of the early tradition than the other." Pg. 282.

⁵⁵ Though we will not here discuss the last five criteria Meier notes, those interested should read both Meier's positive and negative assessment of these criteria: John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 178-183. It must be noted that Meier's forthrightly confesses in concluding his section on criteria: "As many a weary quester has remarked before, the use of valid criteria is more an art than a science, requiring sensitivity to the individual case rather than mechanical manipulation. It never can be said too many times that such an art yields only varying degrees of probability, not absolute certitude. But, as we have already seen, such judgments of probability are common in any investigation of ancient history, and the quest for the historical Jesus cannot apply for a special exemption. Since moral certitude is nothing but a very high degree of probability, and since we run most of our lives and make many of our theoretical and practical judgments on the basis of moral certitude, we need not feel that the results of the quest will be unusually fragile or uncertain. They are no more fragile or uncertain than many other parts of our lives." pg 184. Whether one evinces traces of current epistemological discussions and dilemma here, or follows Alvin Plantinga's thesis on warrant and belief, one can readily see that Meier is not alone in appealing to probability and the inability to establish certainty, regarding most things in life, and in this, historical research is but another bedfellow. N.T. Wright, in somewhat similar fashion, dismisses both historical positivism and phenomenalism as modes of knowing (especially pertaining to the historian) and opts for what is called 'critical realism' (utilizing critical realism is common to several scholars, such as Meier, N.T. Wright and Graham Twelftree). See Wright's discussion on this: N.T. Wright, *New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 32-37. For an interesting discussion on the current state of epistemology in religion, as seen from the perspective of Reformed Epistemology, see: Dewey J. Hoitenga Jr., *Faith and Reason: From Plato To Plantinga* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991). Also Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). This book also provides an excellent study of the classical issues in epistemology, especially pgs. 67-134. For responses to Reformed Epistemology in particular, see: *Journals: Modern Theology*, 6:3, (April 1990). Terrence W. Tilley, 'Reformed Epistemology and Religious Fundamentalism: How Basic Are Our Beliefs?' pgs 237-257. Also: *Theological Studies*, 47, 1986, Vincent M. Cooke S.J., 'Current Theology: The New Calvinist Epistemology', pgs. 273-285. For an excellent survey containing numerous essays on epistemology from Hume onward, see: *Belief, Knowledge, and Truth: Readings in the Theory of Knowledge*, Robert R. Ammerman and Marcus G. Singer, eds., (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons,

Embarrassment

The first, the criterion of embarrassment, as briefly discussed earlier, simply holds to the belief that the early church would not be quick to make up or transform Jesus' sayings or deeds into difficulties for himself or their own development as a church. The classical example here is Jesus' own remark, given his 'Son of God' status in Mark's gospel, occurs when Jesus states that he does not know the day or hour of his return. The historian would naturally suppose that there is nothing to be gained and all to be lost by the church inventing such a saying, and thus, in this instance, despite possible duress, the early church wished to remain faithful to Jesus here.⁵⁷

1970). See also: Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). Grant Osborne writes: "This unwarranted and unrealistic demand for certitude regarding historical events may be called 'the theory of the irreducible minimum'. Certainty is unattainable, however, and every area of life works on the basis of probability. Some recent philosophers argue for extreme caution when applying the word 'certain' to truth-statements, since the doubt element is always present. Instead of certitude we should seek a coherent, justified belief in a truth-statement." Pg 122 Grant R. Osborne "The Evangelical and Traditions-geschichte" *JETS* 21/2 (June 1978): 117-130.

⁵⁶ One, of course, might opt for other sets of criteria, such as the three proposed by N.T. Wright (double-dissimilarity: belonging to the pattern of both Judaism and early Christianity, simplicity: Occam's razor for the historian and seeking to not distort evidence, and coherence: what fits in well with other known data). See: N.T. Wright, *New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 131-133. But we have chosen to follow a path highly recognizable and enjoying a healthy following in terms of the criteria utilized. This is not to say that Meier's is not heavily criticized, anyone employing methods and sifting criteria can expect such and might at times warrant reproof. Consider this insightful of Meier's selection of criteria: "Meier's method is essentially a minimalist approach based on the worn-out model of higher-critical skepticism. He will simply not admit as evidence anything the Gospel writers have written unless it can be independently attested, unless it was a source of embarrassment to early Christians, unless the saying cannot be attributed to early Christianity or Judaism, and so forth. This is not to downplay the importance of these criteria, but it would be interesting to examine the extrabiblical historical background as assumed as fact in some Third Quest books, to see how much of it could stand up to the same criteria... Unfortunately the historical methodology he uses is still a minimalist skeptical approach, which is not generally applied to other areas of ancient history." pgs 465-466, 467. Dennis Ingolfsland, "The Historical Jesus According to John Meier and N.T. Wright" *Bibliotheca Sacra* (Oct-Dec. 1998): 460-473

⁵⁷ Meiers includes the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist, although such a baptism was for repentance and the forgiveness of sins, and in so doing (comparing Matthew, Luke and John with Mark), Mark's gospel seems to evince authenticity. Meiers also adds: Judas' betrayal, Peter's denial, and the crucifixion by Romans. See pgs. 168-171. Meiers note that this criteria; however has its flaws in that it does not provide us with a generous amount of authenticity per the Gospels and it is potentially misleading as what might appear an embarrassment to twenty-first century perceptions might not have been so in Jesus' generation. Meier's example is the cry of dereliction of Jesus on the cross as forsaken by God. Thus, he adds: "The point here is that the criterion of embarrassment- like any other criterion- must not be invoked facilely or in isolation... we are reminded that no criterion can be used mechanically and in isolation; a convergence of different criteria is the best indicator of historicity." 171,175.

Dissimilarity

The second criterion, discontinuity, provides a framework for establishing authenticity in Jesus by looking for uniqueness in his sayings or deeds. In other words, if sayings/deeds of Jesus are not easily derived from either Judaism or the early church, it most likely is original and ringing of authenticity.⁵⁸ Here, the historian seeks to find the originality of Jesus and that which distanced him from his time and evidences his own distance from that of the followers who later wrote of him.

Multiple Attestation

Third, the criterion of multiple attestations concentrates on the words and deeds of Jesus which are found in more than one source and independent of one another, that is, without corroboration. If author 'x' and author 'y' writing separately and in different contexts both share a similar statement concerning Jesus, it establishes greater probability in its likelihood.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Meiers' examples include the issue of oaths in Mathew 5, fasting in Mark 2 and possibly on divorce Luke 16. In these cases, there is no known similarity with a practice or emphasis of either the early church or Judaism. It is this criterion, however, that has significant difficulties. Foremost, it provides a framework for deriving originality, but does so from our own brief and fragmentary knowledge of both Judaism and the early church. In this light, it is a criteria of guesswork, based on random events and preservation in historical literature or archeology. Second, as has been noted before, it produces a portrait of Jesus that wishes to wrap him in a cultural milieu, away from his own context and alien to that of all. Meiers notes two authors with remarkable divergent views on this criterion: "In a sense, Sanders simply takes Perrin's view of the primacy of the criterion of discontinuity and stands it on its head. Instead of 'if it is discontinuous, it must be from Jesus', we now have 'if it is discontinuous, it cannot be from Jesus'. Obviously, dogmatism in either direction must give way to careful testing of claims in each case." John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 173. Finally, Meiers notes, even the term 'unique' is laden with difficulty, for it fails to provide both a cultural context and adequate assessment of the individual as to one's genius, and in which ways this is evidenced or copied from the surrounding environment. Pg. 174. Although quite different in framework, Bart Ehrman considers these two passages as denoting dissimilarity as well: Mark 8: 38 and 25:34-46 (although in both cases, these serve Ehrman's thesis that the 'Son of Man' is not necessarily Jesus himself) pgs. 162-163. Bart Ehrman "Jesus as an Apocalyptic Prophet" Perspectives In Religious Studies, Richard B. Vinson ed., 27, no.2 (Summer 2000): 153-166.

⁵⁹ Meiers adds that the probability is greatly increased if such writing comes from different literary forms and sources. One example of such is that most scholars concede that Jesus did in fact frequently speak of the 'kingdom of God', and multiple attestations supports this (found in Q, Mark, Matthew, Luke, John, etc.), and also that it is found in various forms (parables, prayers, miracles stories, etc.). Further examples include the Last Supper and sayings on divorce. John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 175. Yet, even here with multiple

Coherence

Fourth, the criterion of coherence follows the preceding indexes, and finds authenticity in sayings or deeds which cohere with what has already been plausibly established through the first three criteria.⁶⁰ Questionable sayings or deeds, of which other criterion are unable to produce agreement, are considered in light of the relative strength and correlation to general scholarly agreement. That is, if that which is known of Jesus to be highly authentic already, also finds coherence with the saying/deed under consideration, it is generally held to be accorded a higher degree of plausibility.

Rejection/Execution

Last, the criterion of rejection/execution seeks to encompass a plausibility structure to the fact that Jesus was condemned and died through the Roman power. What sayings/deeds found in the Gospels and beyond can account for the fact of such a violent death? Meiers writes here:

While I do not agree with those who turn Jesus into a violent revolutionary or political agitator, scholars who favor a revolutionary Jesus do have a point. A tweedy poetaster who spent his time spinning out parables and Japanese koans, a literary aesthete who toyed with 1st-century deconstructionist, or a bland Jesus

attestation Meier notes, the skeptic might claim that numerous support simply infers that he early church found great use in a particular saying/deed and thus is found at random and orbital in such literature. Pg 175. Bart Ehrman helpfully comments additionally on this criteria: "In some ways the final criterion is the most important of all. Traditions about Jesus that are found in more than one independent source are more likely to be historically authentic than those found in only one. The logic is pretty self-evident: if a saying, for example, is found in only one source, it is a bit hard to know whether the author of that source came up with it; but if the same saying is found in sources that did not corroborate with one another, then it must ante-date them all. And the more independent sources a tradition is in, the more likely it is to go back to the original source of them all, the life of the historical Jesus himself." Pg164. It should be noted here, that Ehrman specifically singles out three criteria, which he believes almost all scholars appeal to: contextual credibility, dissimilarity and multiple attestation. Pgs. 161-164. Bart Ehrman "Jesus as an Apocalyptic Prophet" Perspectives In Religious Studies, Richard B. Vinson ed., 27, no.2 (Summer 2000): 153-166.

⁶⁰ Meiers finds examples in related kingdom sayings and legal observances, but cautions against using the criterion negatively, in the light that simply because a saying or deed finds no immediate relevance of coherence in other sayings/deeds, it does not mean that it is inauthentic. Meier notes that Middle Eastern teachers/sayings may espouse paradoxes, that Jesus as a great teacher was not necessarily systematic but might appear random and given frequently to the contexts of the audiences. Meier adds: "In short, the criterion of coherence has a certain positive value; but its negative use, to exclude material as inauthentic, must be approached very cautiously." *A Marginal Jew*, 177.

who simply told people to look at the lilies of the field- such a Jesus would threaten no one, just as the university professors who create him threaten no one.⁶¹

It is this comment that bears consequence for our approaching study of the triumphal entry. For it is here, too, that we find reasons for reconstructing the chain of events and motivations of Christ's death. There are certain, though perhaps constrained features to this narrative that forcefully display a plausible hypothesis concerning reasons for his death. Not only was the turning of the tables and attack on the cultic worship of the temple instrumental, but even in his very entrance, the order of events display great coherence in explaining his death, and the evangelists supply these even though perhaps

⁶¹John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 177. One should add immediately, that in utilizing Meier's here, does not escape the revolving problems of criteria and for every criterion noted and employed a dozen detractors supply counter-objections. For instance, Stanley Porter, while evincing the usefulness of Meier's approach, still writes: "Virtually every one of the criteria for authenticity has the limitation that there is a perceivable gap between what the criterion seems to establish and what can be grounded in the life of Jesus, so that a given criterion cannot provide an absolute bedrock for grounding the traditions of the historical Jesus, but is in some way dependent upon other criteria used in conjunction. One cannot help but note that this may well create a vicious circular argument, in which the various criteria, each one in itself insufficient to establish the reliability or authenticity of the Jesus tradition, are used to support other criteria." Stanley E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research*, 110. Porter goes on to note, concerning the criteria of rejection/execution, that Craig Evans and Meier take a tacit vantage and that for Evans, this criteria is central in determining Jesus' sayings/deeds, while for Meier it only provides what seems backbone information to what has previously been established. Pgs. 11-113. For a critique of Thiessen, read Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research*, pgs. 116-123. Porter notes that though Thiessen three-fold dismissal of standard criteria (multiple attestation, coherence, and dissimilarity), he finds promise in the criterion of historical plausibility and its sub-criterion (plausibility of consequence to Christianity, and in consequence to Judaism, while auxiliary criteria are utilized such source coherence, and various 'planks' such as multiple attestation, cross-section, etc.). Porter notes, however: "When one looks more closely at his programme for historical-Jesus research, however, one sees that there is a shift of emphasis rather than a genuine shift in method... it is unclear why the criterion of multiple attestation, which has been criticized for only being able to evaluate the sources and not their reliability, in this new framework becomes more trustworthy. Similarly, the criterion of coherence is used somewhat ambiguously by Thiessen... In his discussion, it is difficult to see what is appropriate to invoke and when the other, without leading to irreconcilable conflict in determining whether the tradition is reliable or authentic." Pgs. 121-122. Thus, the world of methodology is filled with proposals and objections, supporters and detractors. Porter goes on in his book to offer three hopeful new proposals: criterion of Greek language/context, Greek textual variance, and last, discourse features. At the very least, however, Meier does evince a genuine comprehension of the issues and of criterion involved currently and it is for this purpose that he is chosen as representative.

not in toto.⁶² These then are the critical criteria both which J.P. Meiers applies and under which the triumphal Entry will be later assessed. But another issue here awaits.

N.T. Wright and Five Questions for Historical Investigation

N.T. Wright may be criticized for his lack of infinite involvement with critical methodologies (namely, source, form and redaction). He is not one given to inductive, minute details of investigation concerning Jesus. Wright, decidedly investigates Jesus of Nazareth from a broadened deductive approach in contrast to other approaches (*The Jesus Seminar*, for instance). His approach is one that seeks to allow the Gospel materials to speak on their own accord, and, in listening to their metanarrative, then seeks to establish whether the Evangelists' voices do in fact present a plausible portrait of Jesus. In the end, it turns out that Wright's portrayal is one that simultaneously satisfies the inquiry of the historian and deepens the foundation of the believer. Notwithstanding the continued debate over methodologies and sources, and our previous evaluation of several current criteria (and helpfully laid out by Meier), N.T. Wright offers an excellent program for

⁶² More than one scholar has suggested the high plausibility surrounding Jesus decrying the cultic worship in the temple as assisting in Jesus' execution. See for instance, pg. 571, Theissen and Merz Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998). Also: E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 300-306. More specific details regarding the actual trial and motivation for Jesus' death, before his Jewish leaders is found by Darrell Bock "Blasphemy and the Jewish Examination of Jesus" *Bulletin for Biblical Research* Vol. 17, no. 1207, pgs. 53-114. In this article, Bock seeks to appraise the charge of blasphemy against Jesus in light of its meaning and context in first-century Palestine. He works through the issue of coherence (that between the temple cleaning and the charges at his Jewish 'trials'), the authenticity of language used in vs. 61-62, the plausibility of Dan. 7 in the first-century context, and issues surrounding the 'Son of Man'. He summarizes his findings in this manner: "A study of Jewish views of blasphemy and exaltation illumines the ways in which the Jewish leadership perceived Jesus' claims. They saw in Jesus' claims of exaltation an affront to God's unique honor and to their position as representatives of God's people. Jesus saw in his anticipated exaltation a vindication of his calling, ministry, and claims, so that one day he would be seen by all as the Son of Man seated at God's right hand. In other words, the ancient sources and their cultural scripts reveal how blasphemy and exaltation clashed during this examination in ways that changed the course of history. What I have argued is that the case for the authenticity of the summary description of the historic clash is strong." Pg. 114. In this light, Darrell Bock represents a potent Evangelical case for a segment of the Markan narrative that is both contextually plausible and which is also containing contemporary significance.

scholars who find optimism and promise in the Third Quest. This is especially found in his writings as he centers upon five questions which Jesus scholars must contend with today. That is, questions which demand answers and which seek to satisfy historical investigation. Wright states the issue in this manner:

...the five questions are all subdivisions of the larger question which, I submit, all historians of the first century, no matter what their background, are bound to ask, namely: how do we account for the fact that, by 110 C.E., there was a large and vigorous international movement, already showing considerable diversity, whose founding myth (in a quite 'neutral' sense) was a story about one Jesus of Nazareth, a figure of the recent past? How do we get, in other words from the pluriform Judaism that existed within the Greco-Roman world of 10 BCE to the pluriform Judaism and Christianity of 110 C.E.- from (roughly) Herod the great to Ignatius of Antioch? In every generation there are one or two scholars who think this can be done without reference to Jesus. There are also a few dozen who try to do it with only a minimal reference to Jesus. In both cases the weight of counter-probability is enormous... This forces us, simply as historians to ask: who then was Jesus, what was he trying to do, what happened to him, and why? And, just as we can ask such questions about Paul, or the emperor Claudius, or Tiberius' hatchet-man Sejanus (all figures of the first century about whom we have historical evidence), there is every reason to ask them about Jesus as well. So, sharpening up these issues into our five main questions: How does Jesus fit into the Judaism of his day? What were his aims? Why did he die? How did the early church come into being, and why did it take the shape it did? Any why are the Gospels what they are? ⁶³

Suffice it to say, the many portraits that emerge in the Third Quest must address these questions, and it is the potency (or impotency) of their answers which ultimately consign them to varying degrees of strength or to the dismal shelves of irrelevance, filled with arbitrary conclusions, biased and uninformed judgments and contemporary agendas. Nevertheless, it must here be remembered that a reconstruction of the Triumphal Entry must not only take into account the various criteria propounded by Meiers and others today, but it must also seek to consciously and consistently apply the five questions of plausibility. Thus, even if the triumphal entry fares well under close scrutiny to historical criteria, one must still seek to provide a satisfying,

⁶³ N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, pg. 80.

coherent and total-life reconstruction of how this event fits into the overall mission and nature of Jesus of Nazareth. It is for this reason that N.T. Wright provides a helpful supplement to the work of Meiers and also provides a corrective to those who narrowly produce a portrait of Jesus that does injustice to both his immediate context and that of the early church. As shall be seen, once the Markan narrative is given a hearing, the task remains for critical criteria to be employed for the Markan Triumphal and Wright's questions answered accordingly. For now, however, it is necessary to face the scholarly skepticism that surrounds this event.

The Markan Triumphal and Skepticism

Without a doubt, Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem is one of the keystone themes for the evangelists relating the significance of Jesus, both as characteristic of his earthly ministry (tender and compassionate, deserving of honor but always humble) and of his grand theological intent (to die in Jerusalem as their rejected king and for the sins of mankind). It is attested in all four canonical Gospels and has given the church helpful motifs toward understanding the nature and mission of Jesus. Yet, for all this (or, because of this, rather), it must be noted here that there is widespread skepticism from Jesus scholars over accepting the Markan Triumphal as authentic. It is thus necessary to briefly review several scholars' perceptions here and subsequently, their basis for blatant dismissal or hesitancy over this account.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ According to one's criteria and presuppositions, the triumphal entry takes on a variety of approaches and merits disbelief by many. Rudolph Bultmann, for instance, rejected its claims to authenticity. Charles Hedrick, too, sees too much of Mark's own creative thrust in this passage, and thereby it merits distrust given 'key words that are utilized here (and especially, the 'Messianic secret motif of Mark). Hedrick argues that the 'Son of David' terminology is distinctly Markan because Mark utilizes another reference to Jesus and David elsewhere. Pg. 183. Charles W. Hedrick "Parable and Kingdom: A Survey of the Evidence in Mark" *Perspectives In Religious Studies*, Richard B. Vinson ed., 27, no.2 (Summer 2000): 179-199. Though one might question such brief dismissals, it is enlightening to note that given one's axioms (which are less than substantiated often), one concludes certain passages are inauthentic. It is fortunate that the same standard is not applied to our own sayings and deeds. Hedrick's article seeks to support the fact that

Skeptical Views of the Triumphal Entry

A well-known group known as *The Jesus Seminar*, is perhaps the most vocal in its dismissal of this episode. Concerning Mark's account of the triumphal entry, their book, *The Five Gospels* states:

“The account of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is based on Zech 9:9 and Ps. 118:26. The story was conceived to fit the prophecies. Similarly, the words ascribed to Jesus are the invention of the storyteller, either of Mark, from whom Matthew borrows this account, or of someone prior to Mark who developed the narrative.”⁶⁵

the kingdom preaching of Jesus might not be necessarily linked to the parables, but only through Mark's own creativity. He concludes: “Thus the idea that parables mediate the sovereign reign of God, like the messianic secret, may only be an early Christian invention.” Pg. 199 The implications of his thesis are important; if the earliest Gospel which tied in the kingdom (which is many scholars controlling framework for understanding Jesus) with the parables is possibly a Markan invention, then one foundational understanding of Jesus has been called into question. Other scholars are not so skeptical of the triumphal entry. A. E. Harvey, for instance, concedes to the high plausibility of this event (A.E. Harvey; Bampton Lectures, 1980, published: Duckworth: London, 1982).

⁶⁵ *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*, New translation and commentary by Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover and The Jesus Seminar (Macmillan Publishing Company: New York, 1993), Pg. 228. Multiple attestation is not discussed here, simply because it does not fit the Seminar's preconceive notions of what Jesus believed and what the disciples came to believe. The obvious rejoinder here concerns the question whether Jesus might not have been knowledgeable enough of the Hebrew Scriptures to both know and apply this prophecy. The book distinctly concedes to this radical disjunction: “The Jesus of the gospels is an imaginative theological construct, into which has been woven traces of the enigmatic sage from Nazareth- traces that cry out for recognition and liberation from the firm grip of those whose faith overpowered their memories.” Pg. 4. Perhaps the most obvious presupposition of such by the Seminar is stated in this manner: “Christian conviction eventually overwhelms Jesus: he is made to confess what Christians had come to believe.” Pg. 24. Concerning Matthew's version, they write: “The story of the triumphal entry was conceived under the influence of Zech 9:9... the episode was also influenced by Ps 118:25-26, which is cited in vv. 9-10. The double entendre in v. 3 stems from the Christianization of the dialogue (‘Its master has need of it’ can be taken to mean either the owner of the beast of [or?] the Lord, a cultic title for Jesus). The speech of Jesus, like the story, is a contrivance of the evangelist.” *The Five Gospels*, 97. Unfortunately, nothing more is said here, but the assumptions behind such reasoning are fairly clear, operating on the criteria of dissimilarity (it says Jesus is Lord and the church believed that as well, so it is questionable from the outset), the breach between the Jesus of faith and history (we must remove the cultic from the historical Jesus), and tradition criticism (the early church sought to invent meaning into the life of Jesus through instantiating it with O.T. prophecies). The book's comment on the Lukan account is also revealing: “Luke is here copying Mark's account of the entry into Jerusalem. As we indicated in the comments on Mark's version, the words attributed to Jesus are the invention of the storyteller. They are integral to the story and would not have survived as independent sayings during the oral period. The Fellows designated them black by common consent.” *The Five Gospels*, 375. Most notable here is the usage of the questionable application of form criticism. How can one with certainty posit the rules of transmission and provide such a prior assumptions as the measure of authenticity? The book explains its methodology in this manner: “A sixth pillar of modern gospel scholarship... consists of the recognition of the fundamental contrast between the oral culture (in which Jesus was at home) and a print culture (like our own). The Jesus whom historians seek will be found in those fragments of tradition that

Bart D. Ehrman, always helpfully clear in his elucidation of methods and ambitions, also speaks of the triumphal entry. Though less extreme than the Jesus Seminar, he nonetheless questions important features of the Markan story:

Probably the most we can say is that Jesus actually did enter Jerusalem (!), that he was one of the pilgrims coming for the feast, and that he may well have entered on a donkey. Possibly others in the crowds along the roads into town preferred not to walk as well. Moreover, it's possible that at a later time, looking back on his last days, Jesus' disciples read more into the donkey than was originally there. It is also possible, of course, that some of the crowds in Jerusalem had already heard about Jesus' teachings and remarkable deeds and, when he came to the city, wondered aloud if this could be the Messiah. There would have been nothing extraordinary about some such speculation. We know of other Jews both before Jesus' day and afterward who were thought by some to be the future ruler of Israel. And we know what typically happened to such potential threats to the Roman authorities. They were normally executed.⁶⁶

Ehrman is by no means alone in his uncertainty regarding the specifics of Jesus' arrival. It is also noteworthy to read E.P. Sanders' comments on this account in the Gospels. He is perhaps the least biased here against the triumphal entry account as it stands in the Gospels. Still however, in terms of authenticity, Sanders purviews the passion week and rates these major events on a scale of probability: Sanders believes the triumphal entry to be *probable*, the Supper as *almost certain* and the symbolic temple gesture of overthrowing the tables as *certain*. His hesitancy over the triumphal entry is stated in this manner:

“The Gospels offer us an event prior to the temple action which, were it unvarnished truth, could well have led to Jesus' execution: the entry into

bear the imprint of orality: short, provocative, memorable, oft-repeated phrases, sentences, and stories.” Pg 4. See also pgs 19-20, 25-27. They state clearly: “Only sayings and parables that can be traced back to the oral period, 30-50 C.E., can possibly have originated with Jesus.” Pg. 25. Not all scholars who might be considered more radical are skeptical of the authenticity of the triumphal entry. Interestingly, Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan also discuss the triumphal entry, but in less skeptical terms. Their recent article entitled, “Jesus' final week: Collision course”, seems to uphold the Markan record, even chronologically as per the last events of Jesus' life. Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan, “Jesus' final week: Collision course” *Christian Century*, (March 20, 2007): 27-31.

⁶⁶ Bart D. Ehrman, *Jesus: apocalyptic prophet of the new millennium*, 210-211.

Jerusalem... But, as always, there is a problem. The Gospels also put several days between the entry and the execution, during which time Jesus is said to have come and gone without people hailing him as king. If the entry was what we are told it was, why did it take so long for the Romans to execute Jesus?Perhaps the event took place but a small occurrence which went unnoticed. Perhaps only a few disciples unostentatiously dropped their garments in front of the ass (c.f Matt. 21:8/Mark 11:8/ Luke 19:36), while only a few quietly murmured 'Hosanna'. I regard this passage as being one of the most puzzling in the Gospels. If it happened at all, surely the disciples were in on the secret and knew that Jesus was claiming to be king.”⁶⁷

⁶⁷ E.P. Sander, *Jesus and Judaism*, 306. he further writes: “.. the entry was probably deliberately managed by Jesus to symbolize the coming kingdom and his own role in it. I account for the fact that Jesus was not executed until after the demonstration against the temple by proposing that it was an intentionally symbolic action, performed because Jesus regarded it to be true (he would be king, but a humble one) and for the sake of the disciples, but that it did not attract large public attention.” Pg. 308. Sanders, who is quite familiar with this period and the works of Josephus, would cite readily available evidence of Roman might against would-be claimants. Josephus, in fact, mentions a certain false prophet Theudas under the procurator Fadus, who led a multitude to the Jordan river with magic and was brutally squelched by Fadus and his army, who brought his heads back to Jerusalem and killed many others. (Josephus, *Antiquities* Book 20, Chg. 5, I). However, even in this instance the similarities between the Romans perception of Jesus and that of Theudas are noteworthy. Especially in light of what the Romans perceived of Theudas’ intentions who promised the multitudes safe passage by miracle across the Jordan river- symbolizing freedom from slavery and eschatological hopes (for a helpful discussion of the significance of the desert for many ‘prophets’ and the people, see: Daniel R. Schwartz, *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity*, 29-38. By contrast, Jesus’ own mission and intentions (even his attitude toward the Romans) appears much less restrained. Even Josephus’ mention of a certain Egyptian during the reign of Felix under Nero is unique in its contrast as well. It might be beneficial here to note that “...popular prophets were of two fairly distinct types. The principle function of the one, the oracular prophet, was to pronounce the impending judgment or redemption of God. The characteristic feature of the other, the action prophet, was to inspire and lead a popular movement to vigorous participation in an anticipated redemptive action from God.” Richard A. Horsely and John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, And Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row Pub., 1985), 135. Although this distinction might not be as distinct as it appears in first-century Palestine (even oracular prophets sought means to enforce/realize judgment and redemption), notwithstanding, the distinction seems to be helpful especially as far as Romans perception’s of the temerity of a given prophet. That is, the Judean Roman procurator (or Herod Antipas in Galilee) had to constantly adjudicate the fact that Jews sought God’s redemption according to the patterns established in their sacred Scriptures, and that prophets or claimants were but inevitable. It was then, not simply a matter of decisively stamping out any and every ‘prophet’ who appeared, but rather tactfully maneuvering between honoring Jewish hopes in accordance with their past, and simultaneously acting against those who promoted political insurrection to a greater degree than the authorities felt safe. This might explain why the Essenes or the Qumran community in particular were able to coexist with the political powers for a time (Qumran lasted until 68 AD; the time of the Jewish rebellion), or why Josephus describes the common people’s anger against Antipas for his action against John the Baptist (*Ant.* 18. 116-119), or even why Pilate’s brutal action against the Samaritans incurred immediate anger by the Judeans and a delegation sent to Rome to vehemently complain against his action (Pilate had several complaints lodged against him, for which the Roman governor of Syria, L. Vitellius removed Pilate and sent him to Rome to answer the charges: Josephus *Ant.* 18.89). Here it seems, then, that both Herod Antipas and Pilate (for a brief moment), were in this discriminatory period with Jesus for some time. Jesus’ probation was clearly canceled by his decisive actions during the Passion Week. It is helpful here too, to allow the Gospels to supply the veracity in which Jesus’ ministry was able to be extended for possibly three years: Jesus sought to enact redemption (and judgment) largely through his ‘kingdom’ call and especially as it was realized through his understanding of his death as the means of that redemption. These considerations then, seem to grant credence to the idea that the Romans or the Galilean tetrarch) perceived Jesus as a prophet of the first

Skeptical Rationale

As noted briefly, there are a variety of reasons for dismissing the Triumphal Entry as a highly plausible account in the life and mission of Jesus of Nazareth. It would be helpful here to summarize both popular and persistent factors that induce such skepticism. In short, uncertainty originates predominantly from the following four issues: Jesus' tie with O.T. prophecy, using an unbroken donkey from what seems a senseless owner, the crowd's highly perceptive and persistent acclamation, and finally, the lack of Roman intervention over this event. More strictly defined, skeptics find the Triumphal entry to be (1) an invention of the early church because of its need to validate Jesus according to O.T. prophecies, (2) a highly improbably account involving an incredulous miracle or else an indictment of an owner's lunacy in lending out a donkey to Jesus, (3) a biased and imaginative construct of a crowd's implausible perceptions of Jesus, and (4) an event that demands Roman intervention but rather bears little consequence. As noted previous, several of these arguments provide contemporary scholars with the predisposition to dismiss the Triumphal entry as an implausible account.

However, as shall be seen, the Triumphal Entry demands an alternate response and requires serious investigation as to its authenticity. It should not be hastily assigned to redaction, the imagination of the early church, or a miraculous and ridiculous

order, and not a revolutionary with whom they needed to especially concern themselves (until charges of treason were vouchsafed). In this paper, it is noteworthy, that, quite likely, Jesus' parabolic action of riding on the donkey into Jerusalem was but the first action during that fateful week, which served to precipitate the treason charges: here came another claimant to the kingdom, notable both in the unbroken donkey, and the addition in the Hallel Psalm of 'David', together conjuring sure hopes of a Davidic king (to liberate/restore the blessing of Israel). That such hope among the people existed and were seen in many first-century claimants should come as no surprise. See: Richard A. Horsely and John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, And Messiahs*, 106-127. Josephus mentions several insurrectionists and claimants: Herod the Great's action against Karos and Bagoas (Ant. 17. 42-45), Athronges (Ant. 17. 278-285), Menahem (J.W. 2.433-434), and Simon Bar Giora (J.W. 4. 503-504, 529-534).

event (which thereby forfeit its historical nature). But an alternative approach must pay close attention to the Markan text, as well as strict fidelity to the canons of historical investigation. Thus, the remainder of this paper will detail the nuances of the Markan text and consequently analyze the narrative according to several criteria previously highlighted. In the end, it will be demonstrated that the Markan Triumphal yields a high degree of authenticity. But even more, and in consequence, each person must thereby determine how they will respond to this Jesus of Nazareth, who came to Jerusalem as both king and humble servant. In the end, if The Triumphal Entry fares quite well according to ‘Third Quest’ criteria for authenticity, then it follows that a large group of critical scholars must reevaluate their own presuppositions about Jesus of Nazareth, and, moreover, the trilemma previously discussed must now be squarely faced. In the end, one cannot lightly dismiss the Triumphal Entry’s portrait of Jesus, nor the shadow it casts upon many recent visions of Jesus. This is the critical issue: if the triumphal entry reliably points to the ‘historical Jesus’, as far as his nature and mission, then one immediately confronts a Jesus who knowingly approaches Jerusalem as claimant to be king, but one who remarkably weaves this understanding alongside a strange meekness. Thus we have here to contend with this portrait: Jesus of Nazareth; the suffering servant of YHWH, and one who consciously determined to present himself as a Messiah of Israel.

The Markan Triumphal and Renewed Optimism

“Instead of our garments, let us spread our hearts before him.”⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Methodius: Oration On The Psalms 1, *Ancient Christian Commentary On Scripture: New Testament II Mark*, Eds., Thomas C. Oden and Christopher A. Hall, Gen ed. Thomas C. Oden (Downer’s Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press:, 1998), 156.

“Even when the crowds grasped that something great was happening, their inward thoughts remained uninformed, lowly, unworthy and lacking in understanding. But Jesus did these things in their presence not to display pomp but, as I have said, to fulfill prophecy, teach self-denial and to comfort his disciples, who were grieving for his death. He was showing them that he would suffer all these things willingly.”⁶⁹

Preliminaries Matters

It should be noted, first and perhaps quite obviously, that Mark’s Gospel has been chosen as our foundational text out of popular concession, as many scholars deem this gospel to be the earliest and most reliable text toward gaining an accurate portrayal of Jesus.⁷⁰ Therefore, for the sake of simplicity, an analysis of the Triumphal Entry will center primarily upon the text found in Mark 11:1-11.⁷¹

It should be noted too, that although the traditional focus on authenticity has been found primarily in the sayings of Jesus, the deeds of Jesus rightly cannot be overlooked.⁷²

⁶⁹ Chrysostom, The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 66.3. *Ancient Christian Commentary On Scripture: New Testament Ib Matthew 14-28*, Ed., Manlio Simonetti, Gen ed. Thomas C. Oden (Downer’s Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 1998), 128.

⁷⁰ The Jesus Seminar states this assumption clearly: “scholars generally agree that in constructing their own gospels, Matthew and Luke made use of Mark...Mark is now understood to be the fundamental source for narrative information about Jesus. The priority of Mark has become a cornerstone of the modern scholarship of the gospels.” *The Five Gospels*, 11-12.

⁷¹ This is not to concede that Markan priority is necessary in scholarship (or as advocated in the two-source theory). As previously noted, there is still much debate on sources in the Gospels, and one cannot lightly dismiss alternative theories simply because they do not find wider acclaim in current circles of scholarship. E.P. Sanders, even as early as 1969, wisely cautioned against dogmatism here. After reviewing the details of source theories and Mark Gospel in particular, Sanders writes: “The final possibility, and the one here recommended, is that we should take seriously the ambiguity of our results and regard the Synoptic problem with some uncertainty. The evidence does not seem to warrant the degree of certainty with which many scholars hold the two-document hypothesis. It would seem to forbid that a similar degree of certainty should be accorded any other hypothesis.” E.P. Sanders, *The Tendencies Of The Synoptic Traditions*, 278. E.P. Sanders “The fact is simply that scholars have not, and in my judgment, will not agree on the authenticity of the sayings material, either in whole or in part. There are a few sayings on which there is wide consensus, but hardly enough to allow a full description of Jesus... Secondly, when the study of Jesus is equate with the study of his sayings, there is an unspoken assumption that what he really was, was a teacher... There are *facts* about Jesus, his career, and its consequences which are very firm and which do point towards solutions of historical questions...” E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 4, 5. Sanders goes on to relate that Morton Smith is essentially correct in readdressing Jesus studies, away from his teachings/sayings and moving on towards the facts of his life and events/deeds. Of course, Sanders disagrees with Smith in his guiding interpretive framework (Smith: Jesus as magician, wonder-worker and

This, as we have seen, is an important feature of the Third Quest. It is also what makes the triumphal entry so especially potent; it is essentially a narrative of Jesus' own actions (especially choosing the unbroken donkey) and, of course, his perceptions of that pivotal event, including the crowd's reception. Thus, this evaluation will not concede to the long-standing tyranny of form and source criticism, composed of marginalized sayings, but will seek to analyze the totality of both saying and deed, thereby seeking to provide a coherent analysis that promotes the highest degree of plausibility.⁷³

A final preliminary matter is that of the chronology surrounding the triumphal entry. Mark and the other Evangelists obviously situate the triumphal entry alongside the Passion Week in consecutive sequence. However, because of the nature of narrative events in the Gospels (in light of redactional studies), and in cognizance of Mark's proclivity to 'sandwich' events, there is discussion as to whether there is in the triumphal entry, a compression in Mark that is not strictly sequential. Part of the debate surrounding this event, then, is whether these two events (the triumphal entry and the Passion Week) are actually historically distanced, in terms of a matter of months and feasts. On one side, scholars concede to the accuracy of the strict chronology in Mark between the triumphal

Sanders' presentation of Jesus as eschatological prophet). Pgs. 6-8. Sanders develops what he lists as eight facts about Jesus that he considers 'indisputable' (these include that Jesus was: baptized by John the Baptist, a Galilean who preached/healed, he called twelve, ministered to Israel essentially, was involved in temple controversy, was crucified outside of Jerusalem by Romans, had a movement surrounding him which continued after his death, and this movement was persecuted by some Jews). Pg. 11.

⁷³ Source and Form criticism naturally lend themselves to a study of saying primarily, with the assumption that the sayings of Jesus are the principle means of establishing authenticity. That is, the Evangelists wrapped Jesus' sayings in their own literary creation surrounding persons, places and events. Thus, one finds it more convenient to analyze the words of Jesus in the Gospels, but simultaneously shortcuts the entire framework of the individual and corporate Evangelists where they, at the least, agree on basic chronological and spatial details. As in logic, so in historical research; the debate over induction versus deduction continues to impact these discussions. How does one find authenticity in the Gospels concerning Jesus? Does one assume the entire corpus of Mark, for instance, as the starting point for a plausible portrayal of Jesus and seek to find its relevance or authenticity by comparing both its sayings and deeds to the first-century Judaistic context? Or, does one preclude the interpretive framework of Mark from the outset and seeks to establish, case by case, individual pericopes or narrower sayings that are deemed authentic and dismiss those that do not fit current methodological considerations?

entry and the temple cleaning. Thus considerable support is found in the recognition that: “... John, who knows of earlier visits of Jesus to Jerusalem, agrees with Mark in placing not only the triumphal entry but the cleansing of the temple at Passover.”⁷⁴ However, other scholars, reviewing the Markan time frame, conclude that there is a disproportionate time allotted for the week as making the triumphal entry unlikely as placed during the Passion week.⁷⁵ In the end, it is difficult to be certain of the chronological sequence here, and they are happily, in fact, somewhat inconsequential for our present concerns.⁷⁶ With these preliminaries now in order, it is necessary to here trace Mark’s narration of the triumphal entry.

⁷⁴ Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel According To Saint Mark*, Black’s New Testament Commentaries (London: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 256. The fact that all four Evangelists link the triumphal entry with events later in that week, evince confidence regarding their chronology, especially in view of John’s Gospel, whose dissonant voice among the Synoptic Evangelists supports their unanimity at this point.

⁷⁵ Support for this view include the presumption that travelers pilgrims would not attend the celebration so early, and that it is remarkably similar to what was known of cutting greenery during the Feast of Tabernacles (in autumn with their greenery in effect). R.T. France supports the notion of the triumphal entry during the Passion week, in view of the practice of the Psalms sung and performed during Passover, and that it was not just employed at the Feast of Tabernacles. See R.T. France, *The Gospel Of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2002), 429. These are, of course, possibilities and lend themselves to further consideration of the event. There were three annual festivals for which faithful Jews considered the journey to Jerusalem (the three festivals together were called the *Shalom Regalim*): These were the *Pesha* (Passover), *Shavuot* (the feast of weeks- Pentecost, the fiftieth day after Passover) and the *Sukkot* (tabernacles). Of these three, Passover and Tabernacle are frequently proposed as dates for the triumphal entry. *Pesah* occurred on the 15th of Nisan for eight day celebration, and was a spring festival at the beginning of barley harvest. Sukkot commemorated the forty year wander and occurred in the fall harvest season on the 15th of Tishri. In light of these feasts, James R. Edwards notes several factors that suggest a longer period of time between the triumphal entry and his death: (1) The feast of tabernacles (also called the fall harvest) more closely resembles the traditional waving of branches and shouts of ‘Hosanna’. (2) The Passion narrative seems to imply a longer stay than a week (see 11:19, 14:49 and ch. 13). (3) John’s timeline seems more plausible with Jesus being in Jerusalem for the Feast of Dedication (John 10:22- mid-December) and then traveling into Perea, thus having Jesus in Judea and Jerusalem for approximately four months. James R. Edwards *The Gospel according to Mark* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), 332-333. Edwards writes: “It may be that Mark, whom Papias says arranged material according to his own design, telescopes a longer historical process into Passover week. At least two reasons can be advanced for his doing so. First, a one-week passion narrative served catechetical and liturgical purposes by reducing more than a third of the Gospel and the all-important events of Jesus’ passion in Jerusalem into a block of material that could be read and celebrated during Easter week. But second and more important, the material in the passion narrative is oriented around the focal point of the temple, and has been gathered and presented in order to show that Jesus supersedes the temple as the locus dei.” Pg. 333.

⁷⁶ That is because the triumphal entry does not, of necessity, need to be linked immediately the temple cleansing, but may be seen as but one link in the causal chain which precipitated his arrest, or at the least,

Exegetical Analysis: Examining the Story

Mark 11: 1-2: Property and Pilgrims

The Markan narrative begins with both geographical and demographical details concerning Jesus as he approaches Jerusalem. The Evangelist presents the event according to essential locations (Bethany, Bethpage as enroute to Jerusalem and importantly, the Mount of Olives), and essential characters (the crowds, disciples and Jesus). Though these details are comprised from only one verse (Mark 11:1), they provide an important contextual key for understanding the drama to unfold in Jerusalem as well as serving to elucidate Jesus' messianic self-consciousness and mission. To these two details we briefly turn.

In terms of geography, two towns in particular are mentioned by Mark; Bethany and Bethpage. Bethpage (meaning *house of figs*) would not be far from Bethany (Bethpage's precise location is unknown, sometimes referred to in Jewish writings as within the Jerusalem district, but at other times distinct). In either case, it was approximate to Bethany, given especially Mark's coupling of the two towns: Mark

served to provide another enacted parable which further demonstrated both Jesus' person and mission and the subsequent judgment upon the crowds' lack of belief. A tight compression or lengthy of these two events does not substantially alter the importance of this event, except of course, to provide a more immediate plausibility and tighter sequence to what ultimately served in the Passion Week to produce his arrest and charge of treason. Two points must be remembered at all times when studying chronological minutiae in the gospels. First, modern biographical accounts and chronological sequences per exactitude should not be superimposed upon the literary narrative of the Gospels, and reflectively, such contemporary concerns should not cavalierly dismiss the methodology or preeminent concerns of ancient historians. Second, and consequently, Mark and the other Evangelists are intent to demonstrate the primary themes surrounding Jesus' claim as king and ultimately, his reception in both the temple and at the hands of the Romans. This is the critical culmination for which the Gospels have been developing. Thus, the issue of exact chronology in the triumphal entry, though it is by no means useless in analysis, is still by no means decisive to the present issue nor paramount to the interests of biblical writers.

11:1b).⁷⁷ Bethany was approximately two miles east of Jerusalem, traveling over what are with three mountain summits (running north-south) rising from Jerusalem and the Kidron valley.⁷⁸ Bethpage, most likely, was on the eastern side of the middle summit. That is, it was located approximate with the Mount of Olives, whose height rises 2,600 feet above sea level and is 300 feet higher than Jerusalem, providing magnificent views both of Jerusalem (west) and the Jordan valley (east).⁷⁹ It is important to note here too, that according to Jewish sanctity and hope, the Mount of Olives served as a special location for God's presence and for the future coming of his anointed agent.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ According to the Talmud, Bethpage was a suburb outside of Jerusalem. Its precise location depends upon the location of the road which Jesus would have taken from Jericho. There are at least three identified ancient roads which in some way link Jericho to Bethany and provide an approximation for Bethpage.

⁷⁸ According to Mark, Bethany was also the nightly resting place for Jesus and his disciples at times during the Passion week (Mk. 14:3). Much like Capernaum in Galilee to the north, Bethany became for Jesus the base of ministry around Jerusalem in Judea.

⁷⁹ The Mount of Olives is a general term for the series of peaks along the winding ridge that runs adjacent to Jerusalem. For an excellent description of the Mount of Olives and its importance for Judaeo-Christians, see: John Curtis Briggs, "An Investigation Of The Mount Of Olives In The Judaeo-Christina Tradition." Hebrew Union College Annual, 29. (1957): 137-180.

⁸⁰ See 2 Sam. 15:32, Ezek. 11:23, Zech 14:4. Also, of course, is Josephus's reference to the Mount of Olives and the coming messiah (Antiquities. 20.169). To access Jerusalem from the Mt. of Olives, one would descend the western side of the Mount of Olives, through the Kidron valley and enter the Temple area through the eastern gate (Golden gate). R.T. France suggesting writes: "This apparently unnecessary mention of the Mount of Olives may arise from Mark's awareness of its messianic connotations..." 430. R.T. France, *The Gospel Of Mark*, 430, 663. The Mount of Olives is mentioned in significant places in the O.T., including: the way of escape for David from Absalom (2 Sam. 15:30-32), the place where Solomon built temples for the gods of his foreign wives (2 Kings 23:13), the vision of Ezekiel and Yahweh's glory departing Jerusalem and resting on the Olive Mount (Ezek. 8-11), and the highly significant mention by Zechariah wherein Yahweh stands upon the Mount in battle and the Mountain is broken into two (Zech. 14:1-4). There is also extrabiblical reference to this mount where the red heifer ritual was performed (Num. 19:1-10), according to the Mishnah (in the 'Parah' tractate). "Jesus; familiarity with the Mount of Olives stemmed from the fact that, when in the Jerusalem area, he stayed with his friends at Bethany (Luke 10:38, Mark 11:11). At pilgrimage time the population of Jerusalem tripled. The cost of lodging within the city became exorbitant and the poor had to make arrangements in the surrounding villages. Thus each day he walked over the hill to the city and returned at nightfall (Luke 21:37). The lie of the land permits only one route to the city if the traveler wants to avoid climbing in and out of wadis: from Gethsemane straight up the hill to et-Tur and along the ridge to Bethpage (roughly the modern road), then along another ridge to Bethany. One evening, seated on the slope opposite the Temple, Jesus spoke to his disciples of the future of the city (Mark 13:3) whose lack of faith had driven him to tears (Luke 19:37, 41-4). At the bottom of the slope is the garden of Gethsemane where he was arrested a few days later (mark 14:26-52). Luke locates the Ascension on the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:6-12)." Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *The Holy Land: An Oxford Archaeological Guide from Earliest Times to 1700* 4th edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 121-122. "The specific references to the Mount of Lives in the Old Testament are probably only six in number. In each instance the passage is fraught with religious significance; but I general this

The crowd mentioned which surrounded Jesus on his way to Jerusalem are both immediately, the disciples (Mk 11:1b), but also those who presumably those who have been with him on his travels through Jericho (Mk. 10:32-52, and possibly even beyond that in his Galilean and Perea ministry). As such, it must be noted, they would be more favorably disposed to Jesus and would esteem him differently than the crowds later in Mark's account when they are properly situated in Jerusalem.⁸¹

Mark 11: 2-7: Riding a Donkey- Pomp, Pauper and Prophecy

Mark 11:2-7 narrates what *prima facie*, to be an inconsequential, insignificant detail; that of Jesus' riding upon an *unbroken* donkey.⁸² However, its apparent triviality turns into a *coupe de force*, once all four Evangelists are read. What appears trifle (especially to modern sensibilities), becomes what is rather, perhaps the critical event surrounding the triumphal entry as it is narrated in all four gospels.⁸³ Mark is thus not alone here in

significance is only tantalizingly suggested rather than specifically stated." John Curtis Briggs, "An Investigation Of The Mount Of Olives In The Judaeo-Christina Tradition.", 139.

⁸¹ For a more precise composition of the crowd, see: Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary, Vol. II* (Hendrickson Pub: Mass., 2003),⁸¹ R.T. France, *The Gospel Of Mark*, 430, 663. France writes: "There is no warrant here for the preacher's favorite comment on the fickleness of a crowd which could shout "Hosanna" one day and 'Crucify him' a few days later. They are not the same crowd." Pg. 430. As always, careful attentiveness to the text (and context), safeguards against unwarranted and hasty assumptions.

⁸² Mark's Greek is as follows: 'εὑρησετε (you will find) πῶλον (a donkey) δεδεμενον (tied) ἐφ' οὐν (on which) οὐδεὶς (none) ἀνθρώπων (of men) κεκαθικεν (has sat).' Mark 11:2

⁸³ For the Evangelists in toto, the animal is a male donkey: *πῶλον*, which may have a range of meanings from horse. See: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd edition, Frederick William Danker ed., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 900. Three animals must be here distinguished: a donkey, a mule (bred from an male ass and an horse), and a horse. An important passage which immediately comes to mind is Genesis 49:11 (speaking of Judah's destiny). Mark and Luke's term may possibly signify a horse, while Matthew 21: 2 and John 12:14-15 are more specific, using *οἶνον* (donkey/ass) . It should be noted here too, that Matthew (who discusses the female mother in the accompaniment) differs from Mark in including two animals. John Nolland seeks to answer the difficulty of Matthew bringing two animals into the discussion against Markan singularity by noting Matthew mastery of multiple text forms, and parallelism: "He has two animals in this text only because he has a role for two animals". John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005), 837. Similarly, Thomas Neusner writes: "While puzzling, it is unlikely that Matthew intended for us to think of Jesus awkwardly riding on two animals at once. It is clear, however, that the presence of two animals in Matthew derives from his literal use of the Greek translation of Zechariah 9. Hebrew writers often employed parallelism, in which the second phrase reiterates the first with slightly different wording sometimes giving greater precision."

emphasis upon this special beast of burden.⁸⁴ Morna Hooker clearly states the issue of the unbroken donkey chosen: “The fact that the foal was one which no one had ever ridden made it suitable for a sacred purpose; it would also make it appropriate for use by a king, since according to the Mishnah (M. Sanh. 2.5), no one else may ride a king’s horse.”⁸⁵ In fact, several Scriptural passages speak directly to the sanctity of an unbroken animal, including Numbers. 19:2, Deuteronomy 21:3, and I Samuel 6:7.⁸⁶

Thomas R. Neusner, *Recovering Jesus: The Witness Of The New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007), 233. What these statement suggests, is that Mark’s single animal played a role for which there was no need to mention two. This in no way constitutes a contradiction, but a powerful example of two redactors taking an account of Jesus but emphasizing (or disregarding) those elements most germane to their intent. John Calvin calls this an instance of both Hebrew parallelism and an instance of a figure of speech known as a synecdoche (in this case, the part: donkey for the whole: mother and colt). John Calvin, *Commentary On A Harmony Of The Evangelists, Matthew, Mark And Luke, Vol. 1*, translated by rev. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 449.

⁸⁴ It is helpful here to note briefly, that such transportation does not seem to have been a standard mode of travel for any Jew, particularly a Galilean pilgrim approaching a feast day in Jerusalem. Though documentation of pilgrimage travel modes during this era is sparse, we have greater reason to believe that journeying upon a donkey upon which no man had ridden, seems in a likelihood, to be a remote and odd choice for any Jewish traveler steeped both in O.T. Scriptures, as well as in socio-economic considerations. This should naturally fare well then, according to initial assumption under the criterion of dissimilarity. This is not to deny that donkeys were the preferred means of travel or load in this era (the Old Testament refers to both donkeys and mules on numerous occasions: Ex. 4:20, Josh 15:18, Judges 1:14, 1 Sam. 25:20, 2 Sam. 16:2, 17:23, 1 Kings 2:40, 13:13 2 Kings 4:24). Regardless, short journeys did not naturally require an animal for travel, while extensive trips would rather, necessitate the logic behind a beast of burden. This, is confirmed even in the ‘Good Samaritan’ of Jesus’ parable: putting the beaten man on his own animal, which road was enroute to Jericho from Jerusalem. (Lk. 10:334). Such a journey, for the Samaritan was of considerable length.

⁸⁵ Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel According To Saint Mark*, 258.

⁸⁶ Persons of considerable rank often rode donkeys: see Judges 5:10, 10:4, 12:14. One thinks too, of 1 Kings 1 concerning Solomon riding David’s donkey at his coronation. Though it was not unbroken beast, the riding of the mule was an important symbol of kingly installation. In some ways, the passage from Zechariah is remarkable for its double entendre: riding on a donkey symbolized rank and worth, but simultaneously speaks to the conscious dismissal of Yahweh’s king to trust in blatant war symbols. In keeping with several O.T. prophets, the coming of God’s messianic age will usher in peace (war instruments cut off) and prosperity (Isaiah 2:7, 31:1, Jeremiah 22:4, Zech 4:6, Micah 5:10-15, Haggai 2:22). Elizabeth Achtemeier writes: “There is a somber notes introduced when Jesus of Nazareth takes this oracle of II Zechariah’s as a model for his entrance into Jerusalem.. because unlike the setting in II Zechariah, the Divine Warrior’s conquest of evil and the establishment of his rule over all the earth have not yet taken place. Sin and death still reign, and there is still that cross at the end of the road. The Gospel writers all therefore appropriately omit that the king is ‘righteous’ and ‘saved’. His fulfillment of his covenant with his people is yet to be tested, and he has not been saved or delivered from his enemies. He will instead suffer at their hands and be subject to the rule of death. Indeed, so prominent is the thought of the cross in Mark that Jesus is not even celebrated as the Messiah... The Gospel writers are all careful, however, to precede the entry with a prediction of his passion (Matt. 20:17-19, Mark 10:32-34, Luke 18:31-33, John 12:1-8).” Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Nahum- Malachi: Interpretation; A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (John Knox Press: Atlanta, 1986), 153. Achtemeier goes on to note: “The exegesis

At this point too, it is helpful to note that Matthew (Mt. 21:4-7) includes his ninth of ten prophetic statements of Christ. That is, Jesus' decision to ride a donkey fulfilled both O.T. Prophecy (Zech 9:9 and Is. 62:11: speaking of Zion's king comes gentle, riding on a donkey) and simultaneously pointed toward the nature and mission of his messiahship. He is the gentle king, riding on an animal reserved for sacred use (combining the importance of both Zechariah 9:9 and the O.T. use for unbroken donkeys). John's Gospel is much the same in employing the prophecy of Zechariah (Jn. 12:14). Though Mark and Luke do not expressly explicate the Zechariah prophecy of this event, they both place stress upon the nature of the donkey (as unbroken) and is a compelling and significant point in the narrative (Mk 11:4:2 and Lk 19: 30), and there is scarcely found any today who will dismiss the idea that Mark is still not alluding to this prophecy (Mark, in fact, uses the same term for donkey as the LXX does in Zechariah 9:9).⁸⁷ Thus, in either case, whether the Evangelist explicates OT prophecy or simply the unbroken nature of the animal, there is more than meets the eye. That is, the animal Jesus chose bespoke of both his mission and person.⁸⁸ "...by entering Jerusalem on a donkey, Jesus met this

of the text has shown... that the emphasis on the ass and the humility of its rider may not really capture what was intended by Zechariah 9:9-10 and its use by the gospel writers. The figure in the prophet's oracle is described as 'humble' but not because he rides on an ass. Rather he is 'humble' because he is totally dependent on God for his defense and office and reign. His is a kingship of total powerlessness, upheld by an unseen by Divine warrior, who possesses all power." Pg. 154.

⁸⁷ "The animal is identified as a 'colt' (Mk. 11:2, 4-5, 7), using the same term found in the LXX to identify the donkey's foal of the entering king of Jerusalem in Zechariah 9:9 (c.f., Gen. Rab. 75 [48c]; 98 [62a]; b. Sanh. 98a; 99a; b. Ber. 56b; c.f. 1 Kings 1:35).. "L.A. Losie in "Triumphal Entry" Dictionary Of Jesus And The Gospels, eds., Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight (Downer's Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 1992), 855. Many scholars, of course, understand Zechariah 9-14 to be a separate collection of a different source from that of chs. 1-8. However, this in no way undermines the force of Jesus' employment of this prophecy, even if many maintain that it was composed at a later time (the majority view it as composed under the Persian era and some date it as late as the Hellenistic period). For a helpful introduction to this issue, see: Donald E. Gowan, *Theology of the Prophetic Books: The Death And Resurrection Of Israel* (Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, 1998), 165-170.

⁸⁸ John Calvin writes to this end: "Jesus sends his disciples to bring an ass to him, not because he was wearied with the journey, but for a different reason; for, in consequence of the time of his death being at hand, he intended to show, by a solemn performance, what was the nature of his kingdom... This would have been a ridiculous display, if it had not been in accordance with the prediction of Zechariah (9:9). In

expectation [of triumphant king or liberator] in a way consistent with the tenor of his ministry- his kingship would be one of humility and service rather than political conquest.”⁸⁹ Initial objections to this judgment often fall under the guises of form criticism, wherein the early church attached significance to events and sayings of Christ to fit their own *Sitz im Leben*. However, the poverty of such assumptions is that they expressly disallow the very issue that compels its acceptance. In this case, the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was quite capable of comprehending and applying O.T. Scriptures to validate his actions and nature. Now, one could argue that Jesus of Nazareth was totally ignorant of such Scriptures as Zechariah 9:9 or unaware of the instances of Scriptures speaking of an unbroken animal symbolizing sacred and kingly use.⁹⁰ But the burden

order to lay claim to the honours of royalty, he enters Jerusalem, riding on an ass. A magnificent display, truly!” John Calvin, *Commentary On A Harmony Of The Evangelists, Matthew, Mark And Luke*, 447. John Nolland too, sees in Matthew as well as in Luke, the strong link between the prophecy of Zech 9:9 and that of Gen 49:11 (female donkey and son of female donkey). Nolland writes: “There is a dramatic contrast between the royal figure of Gen 49:11-12, who in the best traditions of royal excess and self-indulgence tethers his own beast to the vine in order to satiate himself on the richness of wine and milk, and the figure (no less royal) in Luke... of one who must borrow a donkey in order to stage his royal entry into Jerusalem..., and who does so with full anticipation of rejection and execution’. Jesus’ fulfillment of the messianically understood Gen. 49:10, involves significant inversions: the figure in Genesis ties up his mount in order to celebrate, but Jesus arranges for the mounts to be untied to carry him to his fate of suffering in the royal city.” John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 834.

⁸⁹ L.A. Losie, “Triumphal Entry” Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight gen. ed., *Dictionary Of Jesus And The Gospels* (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 859.

⁹⁰ The context of Zechariah 9:9 and its relation to the rest of Zechariah 9 is much debated (commonly understood that Zechariah 1-8 is a separate unit and Zech. 9-14 are later, and termed *Deutero-Zechariah*), as well as the nature of this ‘king’ (corporate figure or individual person). The nature of the Messiah, branch or Davidic figure all feature prominently in modern debates (see, for instance passages such as Genesis 49:10-11, Psalms 33:16, 72:1 Zechariah 3:8, 6:12, Isaiah 11:3-4, 49:4, 50:8-9, 53:11-12). For a brief overview of Zechariah 9:9 ff., see: David L. Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 And Malachi* (Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, 1995), 56.-59. For an analysis of the overall context of Zechariah as it relates to chapter 9 (and the inclusive continuity of Zechariah 1-14), see: Edgar W. Conrad, *Zechariah* (Sheffield Academic Press: England, 1999), 151-155. Once one begins to evaluate the overall context of Zechariah, (especially 9-14) an intriguing possibility here would be that this passage served a critical role in Jesus’ perceptions and actions during the Passion week. Thus, for instance, surrounding the question of why things have not been relaxed in eschatological hope, Zechariah maintains blame to be found in the ‘shepherds’ (Zech. 10:2, 11:4-17). Does this find relevance in the parable of the wicked tenants that follows the temple cleansing (Mk 12:1-12)? Concerning the issue of exile and the hope of Israel (Zech. 9:10, 13, 10:7), does Jesus see the exilic return as foreshadowed in the Passover meal (Mk. 14)? Does the harbinger of peace come without the use of weapons and assertive authority (Mk. 14:42-50)? Paul L. Redditt, helpfully lists six collections of material from Zechariah 9-14. In this list, one can see major emphases surrounding the crucial drama which unfolded during the Passion Week and precipitate Jesus’ arrest and

naturally falls then upon those who perceive first-century Jews (especially Jewish Rabbis such as Jesus in this instance) to be inept at understanding and appropriating Scriptures. Or, as careless free-thinkers who sought to validate their own work without the use of both sacred and oral tradition. This, however, was not the Jewish mode of validating oneself and following Yahweh. Thomas Neusner writes to this end: “Despite the difficulties such data presents the historian, there is no reason to think that Jesus could not have deliberately wanted to signal to his followers his mission as a peaceable messiah. People often act in deliberately suggestive ways that presuppose knowledge of symbolism.”⁹¹ Conceding to the majority of scholars and their portraits of Jesus, one

crucifixion. Redditt’s list is as follows: (1) restoration of the Davidic kingdom and divine warrior [9:1-10], (2) restitution promised for Ephraim and Judah [9:11-10:1, 10:3b-12], (3) shepherd collection [10:2-3a, 11:1-17, 13:7-9], (4) Jerusalem vision as attacked by enemies [12:1-4a, 5, 8-9], (5) elevation of Judah and the cleansing of Jerusalem [12:6-7], (6) 2nd vision of Jerusalem under attack [14:1-13, 14b-21]. Pg. 636. Paul L. Redditt “Israel’s Shepherd’s: Hope and Pessimism in Zechariah 9-14” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 51 no. 4 (1989): 631-642.

⁹¹ Thomas R. Neusner, *Recovering Jesus*, 233. One might simply note Josephus’ comment: Above all we pride ourselves on the education of our children, and regard as the most essential task in life the observance of our laws and of the pious practices, based thereupon, which we have inherited.” (Josephus, *Against Apion* 1. 12, 60). See: J. Julius Scott Jr., *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 256-259. As any orthodox Jew of his day, Jesus stressed and followed the crucial symbols and motifs of his religion. This meant, as a teacher (or even as a common person) copious and comprehensive usage of the Old Testament, especially the Torah. “Belief that their God was the only true God, that he had chosen them and had given them his law, and that they were required to obey it are basic to Jewish theology, and they are found in all the sources.” E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE-66CE* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1998), 241. Anthony J. Saldarini makes several helpful notes about Jesus’ knowledge and teaching compared to that of the Pharisees. Commenting on chapter 7 of John’s Gospel, he writes: “The kind of influence the Pharisees had and sought to preserve can be seen in what is said of Jesus in Jerusalem. When Jesus taught in the Temple, the Jews marveled because he was learned but had not studied. Just what type of study or legitimization was required is unclear, but community norms for learnedness and teaching authority are common. Most probably what is meant is a familiarity with law and custom recognized by the people and peers, like the Pharisees, rather than an office legitimized by law... The criteria for rejecting Jesus as a teacher are revealing: none of the authorities (*archontes*) or Pharisees have believed in him and the people who have believed do not know the law and so are accursed... Usually the Pharisees do not legitimate Jesus by treating him as an equal. Rather, they maintain a superior position based on asocial recognition of their learning, their influence with the people and their political power in conjunction with the chief priests.” Anthony J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach 2nd ed.* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2001), 190-191. Saldarini’s second chapter is dedicated to explain the complexities involved in analyzing cultures, especially that of ancient Palestine, and doing so according to sociological models. He concludes: “Though the structural functionalist approach to sociology, with its categories of class, status and power, has been rightly criticized and modified, it is still useful for organizing the data and understanding some of the workings of Palestinian and imperial society.” Pg. 34. He goes on to emphasize

should be more naturally inclined to see Jesus as one highly regarded in his era as a powerful teacher and one lucid among a network of Scriptural passages which contained helpful appeals for his own validation. In fact, important work is being done recently to demonstrate Jewish appropriations of O.T. Scriptures for both reflection and validation of their own distinctive mission and actions.⁹²

One should expect that a Palestinian Jew who preached in Israel's synagogues and taught disciples who regarded him as Israel's Messiah, the fulfillment of prophetic expectation, would surely make frequent appeal to the Scriptures. And this Jesus does. He quotes, alludes to and interprets Scripture to advance legal opinions, to prophesy or to make comparisons between himself and/or his ministry and the O.T.⁹³

Thus, that Jesus both understood and was highly capable of applying messianic Scriptures to himself should come as no surprise to those who study Jewish sensibilities (worldview paradigms and presuppositions) and the centrality of the O.T. as necessary for validation.⁹⁴ The distinction here between the Jesus of faith and the Jesus of history is unwarranted, unless that is, one wishes to cancel the religious convictions of first-century

two important elements of that day: honor/shame, and patron/client relations (54-59). What is important to note for present purposes, is that Jesus was certainly knowledgeable of the Scriptures, but that his learning was not 'brokered' through the assumed channels of society. Thus, the question is never whether or not Jesus was 'learned' in Scripture or tradition loosely defined, but whether or not he was able to legitimize his teaching acceptably to both the common people (which he seemingly did) and to the religious elite (which, it appears, he often was not able to procure).

⁹² See, for instance: *Torah Revealed, Torah Fulfilled*, Jacob Neusner, Bruce D. Chilton, and Baruch A. Levine (T&T Clark International, 2008).

⁹³ C.A. Evans "Old Testament In The Gospels" Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight gen. ed., *Dictionary Of Jesus And The Gospels*, 579.

⁹⁴ Assessing Messianic interpretations of various O.T. passages is highly debated. It should be noted there, that while the Targum gives to Zechariah 9:9-10 no special Messianic attachment, it does so for Zechariah 10:4. One might respond to this Messianic absence in Zechariah 9:9-10 in several ways; the *targum* context is spatio-temporally distinct, it evidences Israel's dismissal of a suffering Messiah (and is possibly a reaction to the early church), or, regardless of its Messianic absence for this passage, it serves to establish a case for the innovation of Jesus and so evidences authenticity in its dissimilarity. However, the Babylonian Talmud does evidence Zechariah 9:9 as demonstrating Messianic import. "R. Hillel said: There shall be no Messiah for Israel, because they have already enjoyed him in the days of Hezekiah. R. Joseph said: May God forgive him [for saying so]. Now, when did Hezekiah flourish? During the first Temple. Yet Zechariah, prophesying in the days of the second, proclaimed, Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy king cometh unto thee! He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass." (Sanhedrin 99a) *The Babylonian Talmud, Seder Nezeikin in 4 volumes*, Rabbi Dri. Epstein, ed., (The Socino Press: London, 1935), 669.

Jews and rather opt to favor the novel and highly imaginative creativity of the early church. In the end, Jesus' choice of an unbroken donkey to enter Jerusalem inclines the observer to see here another enacted parable (in line with the O.T. prophets like Jeremiah, or Ezekiel) and reflective of Jesus' greater message (the kingdom as near but not in the manner of conventional wisdom, i.e, reaching out to sinners, outcasts, and found in the person of Jesus). All the while, the unbroken donkey signifies both his kingly nature and as coupled with his humility and peaceable mission. Jesus' triumphal entry, then, is but another event replicating what many scholars concede to be the essential Jesus; one who presented a fundamentally radical and liberal kingdom in its invitees and proclamation, and one that was appropriated through his own person and work. This leads Jesus scholars such as Craig Blomberg to summarize the triumphal entry as follows:

“This story is usually called the ‘triumphal entry’ and has been celebrated throughout Christian history on ‘Palm Sunday’, one week before Easter. But it might be better labeled the ‘a-triumphal entry’... Jesus is making deliberate messianic claims... Jesus is acknowledged by the crowds of Galilean pilgrims in a manner reminiscent of the greetings for rulers in Old Testament and intertestamental times... and cry ‘Hosanna’ (Hebrew, ‘God save us’), using messianic language from the pilgrim’s Psalm 118 (vv. 25-26), which was customarily sang during their ascent to the Temple Mount. The crowds still do not understand, however, that Jesus has come to his nation’s capital to die and that reigning as king must await a future day. Unlike the war horse, the donkey is an animal of peace and humility. No Romans will be conquered this week. Luke’s immediately preceding parable of the pounds was told to dispel the notion that the kingdom would come in power at once (Luke 19:11).”⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Craig L. Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels* (Nashville: Broadman Pub., 1997), 314, 316. See also: Darrell Bock *Jesus According to Scripture* (Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, 2002), 484-48 and John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 836. The fact that the Gospels writers (Mt. and Jn.) attest to the ‘a-triumphal’ entry is found precisely in their absence of Zech. 9:9d: ‘He is righteous and victorious’. One must be careful not too make too much of the fact that Jesus came in upon a donkey and not a war horse. First and foremost, it is argued, he rode the donkey to fulfill prophetic literature which spoke of his kingly role. Second, and only derivatively, one might argue that the horse would be especially harmful to his mission and Roman suspicions during his final week, and that it was harmful toward a proper evaluation of his gentle and servant mission. There is truth to be said in the common belief that his first arrival precipitated a donkey, but his subsequent return will be upon a warrior horse. The writer of the Apocalypse certainly sees no difficulty in his vision of Jesus riding a horse upon his returning eschatological triumph (Revelation 19: 11-21). Then too, as noted previous, one must be cautious to assimilate the overall contextual significance of a donkey for regality: “The great significance often attached to the lowliness of the ass here in contrast to the

In addition, it might be helpful here to note that several scholars have noted here too the latent similarities between the entrance of Jesus to Jerusalem and that of the O.T. concept of the entrance of kings as well as that of Hellenistic customs.⁹⁶ Even though this is far from definite (that Jesus intended his entrance to mirror kingly figures according to Hellenistic expectations) it certainly shows that such an understanding of this event is not without plausibility, in view of first-century customs, and in the manner by which Pilate himself would have approached the city from his coastal city to this Jerusalem feast, complete with entourage and with significant pomp.

Mark 11: 2-6: Lord, Lending, and Lexicon

Mark 11:3 provides what for many is a standard objection to this section of the narrative, namely, the term ‘Lord’ being used of Jesus, and seen as uncharacteristic for Mark, (in this instance, the ‘Lord/Master’ has need of the donkey). It must be noted here in brief, that the term *κύριος*, has a range of meanings (owner, master, entitled individual, sir, generally of a person deserving of respect/dignity),⁹⁷ and even if the

horse is based on estimations foreign to the ancient Near East. The ass was in no way unworthy of the noble (Judg 10:4; 12:13 and I Sam 16: 1-2). Indeed Asherah rides on an ass, as ass decked in splendor and fit for a queen of heaven (4.4.1ff [51]). Likely Ball too was pictured as riding upon an ass in procession to his temple. If the ass was not a lowly creature, what is the significance of the contrast between the ass upon which the king rides, and the horse and chariotry which he will banish from the land? We would suggest that underlying the passage is a kingship ideal wherein the ass, rather than the horse and chariot, was the bearer of the king in the royal procession. We can only speculate that the locus of this ideal was in the Canaanite realm prior to the introduction of the horse and chariot by the Hyksos.” Pg 43. Paul D. Hanson “Zechariah 9 And The Recapitulation Of An Ancient Ritual Pattern” *Society of Biblical Literature* 92. no.1 (Mr. 1973): 37-59. Hanson goes on to suggest that horses and chariots were detrimental to Israel’s dependence upon Yahweh for victory, and the several OT narratives link horses and chariots with degeneration in Israel. See 43-44.

⁹⁶ For O.T. concepts, see 1Kings 1 (Solomon), I Macc. 10:86-89, 11:60-61 (Jonathan Maccabaeus), also 2 Sam. 6 (the ark). Per Hellenistic usage and Luke’s portrayal see: Brent Kinman “*Parousia, Jesus’ ‘A-Triumphal’ Entry, And The Fate Of Jerusalem: Luke 19:28-44*,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 118, (Summer 1999):,279-294.

⁹⁷ See: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd edition edited by Frederick William Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 576-579. This Lexicon

donkey's direct owner did not know of Jesus (which we are not assured of either), the following comment to return the donkey after use reveals fidelity to the laws of borrowing and also perhaps fidelity on the part of an devout Israelite who complied with the needs of another.⁹⁸ Or, another consideration here is worth repeating, but one that somehow is constantly neglected:

“Historically there is no reason why Jesus could not have arranged beforehand to have a colt ready. Only if we deny Jesus a messianic consciousness can we deny this possibility. The likelihood of the owner's accepting the commandeering or requisitioning of their animal by a stranger is quite low, as is the availability of a donkey that had never been ridden.”⁹⁹

Thus, from what we know of Jesus' familiarity with Jerusalem and Bethany and some of its residents (especially given John's Gospel), Jesus' acclaim in public, and even of first-century hospitality customs, there is no immediate reason to relegate this lending of the donkey to either legend or lunacy of the donkey's owner.

Mark 11: 7-10: Spreading Greens and Greetings

Mark 11:7-10 speaks to the positive crowds' acclaim of Jesus enroute to Jerusalem upon the donkey. As Jesus approaches the city in Mark 11:8, the crowd places vegetation from the fields and places it underfoot (στῖβας: bed of straw, leaves,

lists several usages of this term (a used of an owner who is in charge of a possession, one who has authority or mastery in terms of position, either used for human beings or of God). On the other hand, R.T. France writes that the title could in this case certainly apply to God: “In that case the password asserts that the donkey is needed for God's service, a bold claim by Jesus for the significance of his own arrival in Jerusalem, but one which is no surprise to those who have learned from Mark that Jesus is bringing in God's kingdom.” R.T. France, *The Gospel Of Mark*, 432.

⁹⁸ Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel According To Saint Mark*, 259. In fact, The securing of the donkey is but first-century protocol for a rabbi needing such transportation and is covered in O.T. law in terms of borrowing. (1 Sam 8:16, Ex 22:14-15);

⁹⁹ Robert H. Stein, *The New American Commentary: Luke. Vol. 24* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 479 Also, R.T. France, *The Gospel Of Mark*, 430, 663. 432.

vegetation).¹⁰⁰ Matthew, like Mark records the positioning of the crowds ascending to Jerusalem, suggesting perhaps a narrow road where it was necessary for the crowds to be either before or after Jesus. In any case, the throngs of pilgrims attending Jesus to Jerusalem were of a sufficient number and most likely following the steep and arduous caravan road from Jericho to Jerusalem, passing from Bethany to Bethpage to now Jerusalem proper.

This account posits no difficulty toward authenticity, as the narration simply involves the spreading of garments (most likely one's outer garment/coat), and one simply does not know the extent for which first-century Jews would have performed unique customs or those in keeping with the sacred Scriptures (but one recalls rather, a similar event of Jehu in 2 Kings 9:13). It is a point, which alongside the vegetation spreading and subsequent Psalms and acclimates, does allude to the strength of the crowds' perceptions of Jesus' character. It is, of course, interesting to note the similarities and emphases of the respective evangelists as they relate this account. So, for instance, Mark, Matthew and Luke refer to the garments spread before Jesus on the road, Mark and Matthew refer to branches cut, and John to the distinctive palm branches. And there are compelling reasons why certain features demonstrate redactional concerns.¹⁰¹ Important

¹⁰⁰ One might find support here too, in the Markan triumphal as immediately before the Passion Week, simply in light of Mark's mention that vegetation was spread underfoot and not, as in the Feast of Tabernacles held by hand, and consisting of branches of palm, myrtle and willow. R.T. France, *The Gospel Of Mark*, 433.

¹⁰¹ Robert Stein writes: "Luke made no mention of the spreading of branches, perhaps due to the nationalistic overtones of such an act." Robert H. Stein, *The New American Commentary*, 479. Stein also cites the significance of palm branches for Israel: John 12:13, 1 Macc 13:51, 2 Macc 10:7, Rev 7:9, and its appearance on Judas Maccabeus' coinage.

comparison among the Gospels reveals too, the singular mention of Jesus' weeping over the holy city and its destruction of Jerusalem as found in Luke, (Lk. 19: 41-44).¹⁰²

Mark 11: 9-10 essentially narrates the crowds' vocal response to Jesus of Nazareth. This account is highly dismissed on the claim that it is a post-Easter faith being assumed by Mark.¹⁰³ However, the salient Psalm, which seemingly invokes direct

¹⁰² Jesus weeps, of course, for the disaster which will befall this city. His weeping immediately precedes the second of Luke's three prophecies concerning Jerusalem's judgment (Lk 13:34-35, Lk. 19: 42-44, Lk. 23:26-31). It plays an important part to in the parable of the wicked tenants in Lk. 20:9-19 and is a distinct emphasis of this Evangelist. Interestingly, the link between the ambition to kill Jesus in Luke is that of his teaching, whereas for Mark it is found in his cleansing the temple. (see: Lk. 19:47-48 and Mark 11:18). Luke also differs from Mark in relating the Pharisees attempting to silence the praise of the crowds (Lk. 19:39-40). Concerning John's usage here of palm branches, see: Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 868-869. Keener notes that the crowds were familiar with the symbolism of palm branches, for possible usage of temporary shelters during the Feast, and the abundance of palms in Jericho as lending support to John's historicity in this account. John also tightly compresses the details of the other Evangelists. Keener writes: "John's special touch is evident even in the details. It was not an unusual practice to abbreviate a narrative by omitting intermediaries, as Matthew seems to do on some occasion (Matt 8:5/ Luke 7:3-4; Matt 9:18/Mark 5:35); thus no one will be alarmed that Jesus himself 'finds' the donkey (12:14)..." Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 870. John's explicit mention of Palm branches is important. D.A. Carson also notes the symbolism of palm branches for Israel and the fact that its particular usage during the Passover does not count against the triumphal entry being an earlier event (as assumed by T.W. Manson). D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John: The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1991), 432. The words of D.A. Carson on John's use of Zechariah 9:9 is enlightening and worth repeating at length: "After the promise of the coming of the gentle king, God further promises, 'I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle-bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from River (i.e. The Euphrates) to the ends of the earth. As for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will free your prisoners from the 'waterless pit' (Zc 9:10, 11). Three points stand out: (1) The coming of the gentle king is associated with the cessation of war: this, too, was understood by John as defining the work of Jesus in such a way that he could never be reduced to an enthusiastic Zealot. (2) The coming of the gentle king is associated with the proclamation of peace to the nations, extending his reign to the ends of the earth. The latter half of Zechariah 9:10 is itself a quotation from Psalm 72:8, which promises a world-wide reign for Zion's king, a son of David. (3) The coming of the gentle king is associate with the blood of the covenant that spells release for prisoners- themes already precious to John (cf. 1:29, 34; 3:5; 6:35-38; 8:31-34), and associated with the Passover and with the death of the servant-king that lies immediately ahead." D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 433-434. Of course, the issue here is over whether Zechariah speaks of corporate Israel as returning to Yahweh (in keeping with the Is. 53 interpretation now quite common) or as attributed to a single agent of Yahweh. See: Adrian M. Leske "Context And Meaning In Zechariah 9:9" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 62.4 (Oct. 2000): 663-678, and also: G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007). Obviously, the Evangelists (and I would argue, Jesus himself) saw fit to apply a passage such as Zechariah 9:9 individually to Jesus' messianic nature. We can argue over proper interpretation, but the fact that such passages were applied to Jesus is beyond question, whether or not one appreciates alternate hermeneutical grids.

¹⁰³ "Psalm 118 is framed between the shortest and the longest Psalms (117 and 199) and is the concluding psalm in the so-called 'Egyptian Hallel' (Psalms 113-118), a collection customarily used at annual festivals and especially during the Passover." Konrad Schaefer, *Berit Olam Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry: Psalms*, David W. Cotter ed., (The Liturgical Press: Minnesota, 2001), 288. Concerning the authenticity of

worship of Jesus (at least for the Evangelists), must also be placed alongside contextual considerations which support the fact that the crowds used this Psalm according to its typical motif, that of praising God. In fact, the acclaim of the crowds is from Ps. 118: 25-26 and would be easily heard in the festival pilgrimages to the holy city.¹⁰⁴ James

this acclaim, Joseph Fitzmyer writes: “Even if one has to recognize that Ps 118:25-26 lies behind the acclamation in the Gospels, it is noteworthy that the Semitic form... is transcribed here in its earliest attestation in Greek as ... ; none of the evangelists has used the Greek translation of it from the LXX. It stands, for that reason, a good chance of representing a genuine primitive Christian recollection of what was shouted to Jesus on the occasion of his entry into Jerusalem or at least of what was often shouted to pilgrims like him coming to the city of Jerusalem.” Joseph A. Fitzmyer S.J., *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Origins* (William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.: Grand Rapids, 2000), 121. The common objection, of course, is that the shouts of ‘Hosanna’ and acclamations directed to Jesus of Nazareth would suggest an immediate reaction and motivation of his death. Thereby Marks’ account is viewed as suspiciously inauthentic (given too, the fact that Romans did not usually stand for would-be usurpers or false claimants, especially during the anxious and heightened moments surrounding festivals). In John 12:13 the crowds ‘crying’ out “hosanna!” is in the imperfect, suggesting a continual and persistent cry. D.A. Carson writes: “The cry Hosanna!, originally a transliteration of Hebrew hosi na na (lit. ‘give salvation now’) had come to be a term of acclamation or praise. Every Jew knew of its occurrence in Psalm 118:25, for Psalm 118 is part of the Hallel (Pss 113-118), sung each morning by the temple choir during the Feast of Tabernacles... but also associated at this period with the Feast of Dedication (on which cf. 10:22, 2 Macc 1:9, 10:6) and with the Passover (cf. Mishnah Pesahim 5:7; 9:3; 10:7). Indeed, at Tabernacles at least (and possibly other feasts), every man and boy waved his lulab (a few shoots of willow and myrtle tied with palm) when the choir reached the Hosanna! In Psalm 118:25. The connection was so strong that many Jews referred to their lulabs as hosannas. The succeeding words are also drawn from Psalm 118. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord (cf. Ps. 118:26) originally conferred a blessing on the pilgrim heading up to Jerusalem: ‘in the name of the Lord’ modified ‘Blessed’. It is possible that in the psalm the welcome and blessing were pronounced upon a Davidic king (though that is not explicitly said). Certainly in the Midrash on Psalm 118 this line is understood messianically: the one who comes in the Messiah (Midrash Tehillim 244a, cf SB I.150). So here; the crowds do not simply pronounce a blessing in the name of the Lord. The next line shows that this is the way the crowd understands their own words: Blessed in the King of Israel is not a quotation from Psalm 118, but messianic identification of ‘he who comes in the name of the Lord’.” D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 432.

¹⁰⁴ This Thanksgiving Psalm was known to have been used during the Feast of Tabernacles, Passover and possibly Pentecost and was entirely appropriate for pilgrims as an address and expression of devotion to their God. Hans-Joachim Kraus divides the Psalms processional orchestra in this manner: verses 1-4 were performed antiphonally, 5-21 as an individual thanksgiving, and 22-29 again as a host of voices shouting praise. He further notes: “That Psalm 118 was sung and presented by different voices is attested in the later Jewish tradition in T and b. Pesahim 119a.” Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150, A Continental Commentary*, translated by Hilton C. Oswald (Fortress press: Minneapolis, 1993), 394, 395. Arthur Weiser differs slightly from this processional form, and further notes that this processional would have been sung and reached a climax around the temple and its’ alter, with the priests sounding the greeting (Ps. 118: 26-27). Arthur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*, translated by Herbert Hartwell (The Westminster Press: Philadelphia, 1962), 724-730. See also: Konrad Schaefer, *Berit Olam Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry: Psalms*, 290-291. Joseph Fitzmeyer writes: “What had been originally a cry for help in pre-Christian Judaism (Ps 118:25) thus became in the first-century Palestine a spontaneous cry of greeting or a cry of homage. That *wsanna* was a prayer addressed to God for help to be shown to the Messiah, as E.P. Gould once sought to explain it, is unlikely. That the greeting is extended to him who is the Messiah in Christian belief in Mark 11:10 or Matt 21:9 is clear, but there is simply no evidence for the association of the cry... with a messianic expectation in pre-Christina Judaism.” Joseph A. Fitzmeyer S. J., *The Dead Sea*

Edwards, in fact, comments on Mark's usage of Ps. 118 and the currency with which the Psalm would have been used by the crowds in first-century Palestine:

“The summary effect of the quotation in vv. 9-10 is thus not overtly messianic. Indeed, had the crowd intended the acclamations of vv. 9-10 to refer to a specific messianic fulfillment in Jesus we should be surprised that Jesus was not promptly arrested by roman authorities (see Acts 5:37, 21:38), or that charges to that effect were not raised at his trial (14:55-58). There are of course subtle messianic undertones in Jesus' riding a colt into Jerusalem as the gentle and peaceable messiah of Zechariah 9, but it is doubtful whether the crowd or authorities grasped their full significance. Like that of countless other Passover pilgrims to Jerusalem, Jesus' entry was apparently regarded by the masses as a pilgrimage rather than a messianic triumph.”¹⁰⁵

Morna Hooker agrees: “...as Mark tells the story, the incident is certainly not the unambiguous assertion of messiahship which later interpretation had made it, even though Mark himself regards it as clear enough to those with eyes of faith.”¹⁰⁶ Simply put, we have no way of knowing the deeper motivation of the crowds on that day with their cries of ‘Hosanna’, nor can we ascertain the extent of their multifarious perspectives

Scrolls and Christian Origins, 128. Fitzmyer argues against those who view this Psalm as messianically interpreted. He contends that all such interpretations are of later origin than Jesus' day (dating the 5th century and even as late as 600-900AD). It was, of course, for the Psalmist, originally a cry of help to Yahweh but that, in fact, a semantic shift had taken place. See pgs. 119-129. This, however, is not to deny a variety of interpretations regarding the usage of this Psalm. For a brief overview, see: Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150, A Continental Commentary*, translated by Hilton C. Oswald (Fortress press: Minneapolis, 1993), 394-396. Also: Arthur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*, translated by Herbert Hartwell (The Westminster Press: Philadelphia, 1962), 724-725.

¹⁰⁵ James R. Edwards *The Gospel according to Mark* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2002), 337. The Mishnah supports the usage of Psalms and palm waving during the Feast. The Mishnah, of course, was the first authoritative compilation of the oral law from scribes approximately 200-300 AD. For a helpful introduction to the history and formation of the Mishnah, see: Jacob Neusner, *An Introduction to Judaism: A textbook and Reader* (Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, Kentucky, 1991), 157-191. Mishnah means ‘teaching’ or ‘instruction’. Its purpose was to supply teachers of the law with a reliable, authoritative guide to interpreting and applying Jewish law which arose because of problems and debates over the oral law. The Talmud (200-500 AD) in turn incorporates the Mishnah and rabbinical discussion of the Mishnah known as the Gemara expressly discusses the palm branch in celebration (Sukkah 3.1) in speaking of valid or invalid branches that may be used. Sukkah 3.9 states: ‘And where do they shake the Lulab? At the beginning and the end of the Psalm ‘O give thanks unto the Lord’, and at the ‘Save now, we beseech thee, O Lord.’ The Mishnah Translated by Herbert Danby Oxford University Press: New York, 1933). 177. The Babylonian Talmud also extensively discusses the ‘four species’ notably the lulab (palm branch) *The Babylonian Talmud* Chapter 3-4, Tract Succah Michael L. Rodkinson Vol. VII (Boston: The Talmud Society, 1918).

¹⁰⁶ Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel According To Saint Mark*, 256-257.

on this Jesus of Nazareth. But, *prima facie*, there is simply nothing in the text that demands a full confessional from the crowds regarding Jesus of Nazareth, correlating with the Nicene Creed of the later church. There is no reason to assume that as many in the crowd shouted out this Psalm, that they directly conferred to Jesus all that the Psalms implicated to the church at a later time. This then, obviously dismisses the claim that a sizeable crowd chanting this Psalm would induce swift Roman action. Moreover, in studying Mark's literary style, one is confronted with a complexity: Jesus is the Son of God, accorded highest praise by demon and saint, and yet simultaneously, Mark weaves into his story the fact that very few seemed to have correctly comprehended Jesus' person and purpose.¹⁰⁷ In sum, a careful reading of Mark's account coupled with first-century Jewish praise motifs and Psalms certainly checks the hasty assumption that this was a straightforward and strong messianic greeting directly addressed to Jesus of Nazareth

¹⁰⁷ "Superficially, these chapters seem to be a success story. Jesus rides into Jerusalem and is hailed as king by the crowds; he teaches in the temple, stands up to the authorities, and is applauded by the people. For Mark, however, they are a story of failure- the failure of Israel and of her leaders to worship and serve God, and her failure to receive his Messiah." Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel According To Saint Mark*, 253. Robert H. Stein writes to this same effect: "It is quite possible that, as in the case of Peter's confession, the crowd's response was more correct than its understanding (c.f. Mark 8:29 and 8:31-33; note also John 11:49-53). Perhaps something lie the following took place: Jesus; conscious of his messiahship, chose (perhaps even arranged) to ride into Jerusalem on a young colt in fulfillment of Zech 9:9. He was welcomed by the crowds who greeted him, and the other pilgrims, with a typical pilgrim greeting: 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. From the house of the Lord we bless you' (Ps 118:26). This was done with great enthusiasm, especially by Jesus' disciples, due to his popularity and fame. Thus, although the people did realize it, Jesus' self-conscious messianic act of entering Jerusalem in fulfillment of Zech 9:9 was greeted with a response worthy of the messianic King. There was, however, no equivalent understanding by those extending this greeting. Later, the church, reflecting upon this event and the OT Scriptures, came to a fuller understanding of what had transpired and highlighted certain aspects of this..." Robert H. Stein, *The New American Commentary*, 477-478. Paul J. Achtemeier writes of the Markan blind Bartimeus story preceding the triumphal (Mk 10:46-52): "Mark clearly thinks of discipleship primarily in relation to the passion of Jesus (cf. 8:34-35), a point made clear by the repeated predictions of the passion precisely within the section dealing most clearly with the nature of discipleship (8:22-10:52). That same point may be indicated by the placing of the story of Bartimeus just before the beginning of the events in Jerusalem which culminated in the passion." Paul J. Achtemeier "And He Followed Him: Miracles And Discipleship In Mark 10:46-52." *Semeia*, no. 11, (1978): 115-145. pg 136. I would add here too, that the shouts of 'Hosanna' and reference to David fit in quite naturally with the Markan account of the triumphal entry. That is, Mark naturally sees Jesus' person and mission as befitting his Jerusalem entry, that lowly, suffering and on the way to the cross: this for Mark is natural for the Master and his disciples.

from the corpus of the crowd.¹⁰⁸ In balance, it must be noted that there is also nothing that detracts from the fact that *some* in that Pilgrim throng did understand Jesus' action on the donkey and appropriated more to Jesus than either Rome or the religious authorities would willingly approve. Going even deeper here, nothing here disproves Jesus as one who self-consciously knew that he was the Messiah (crowd perceptions do not equal Jesus' own). Above all, Jesus knew that this scene was correct for God's anointed one.¹⁰⁹ As critical criteria will later reveal, riding the sacred unbroken donkey in

¹⁰⁸ R.T. France comments that the Psalm had no particular messianic usage in that context, "But the person addressed in the singular in v. 26 of the Psalm may well have been the king celebrating a national victory, so that the formula was well suited to express the crowd's perception (on the basis of Zech 9:9-10) of the royal and victorious arrival of Jesus in Jerusalem. The greeting is expanded in v. 10 with the words no longer drawn from Ps. 118. The first three words are repeated (with the necessary gender change), but now in place of a person it is a kingdom whose arrival is greeted. The concept of a kingdom 'coming' is familiar from 1:15 and 9:1, but that was the kingdom of *uios David* which the crowd heard at Jericho had been remembered, and it is hardly surprising if now the king d=riding into the city of David is expected to reestablish Israel's national sovereignty, the *basilea tou patros hemown David*. In deliberately enacting Zc. 9:9-10 Jesus can have expected no less; David is not mentioned at that point in Zechariah (but see 12:7-13:1), but the king riding in triumph into Jerusalem as 'your king' is clearly modeled on David. It may be, as we shall see at 12:35-37, that Jesus would wish to challenge a purely Davidic understanding of his royal claim, but he could not claim that the crowd's Davidic interpretation of his ride into the city was unjustified, however limited their perception of its significance. This first dramatic public gesture, therefore, has placed the Galilean preacher firmly in contention for the title 'King of the Jews', and that title will be at the centre of his Roman trial (15:2, 9, 12, 18, 26, 32). For the Jewish leaders it would not have the same connotations as for the Roman governor, and 'Son of David' had an honorable place in their messianic ideology. But that does not mean that they would be pleased to hear it shouted outside the walls of Jerusalem by an excited Galilean crowd escorting a Galilean pretender, particularly one whose teaching and activity in Galilee have already given cause for scribal concern." R.T. France, *The Gospel Of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 434-435.

¹⁰⁹ As noted previously, the discovery and appropriation of first-century sources serves to confirm that the Evangelists' should not immediately be seen as redactors or those simply following early church creativity. Qumran literature, for instance (though dating from 200 BC to the fall of Jerusalem), has helped to confirm this. In fact, an interesting case of this is found in John the Baptist's imprisonment and questioning of Jesus' identity (Mt. 11:2-6, Lk. 7:128-23). What is fascinating is that Jesus' reply to John the Baptist is closely identical with what is found in the Qumran literature (4Q521). This leads James Tabor and Michael Wise to write: "That fact indicates minimal redaction on the part of both writers. The source clearly reflects a pre-Synoptic formula for identifying the Messiah, which likely functioned in disputes between rival messianically oriented groups before 70 CE... What might this parallel indicate regarding the early history of the Jesus movement in Palestine as reflected in Q and that of the movement responsible for the Qumran text? It is certainly significant that the Q Source passage is directly linked to discussions about the signs of the Messiah among the disciples of John the Baptist and the followers of Jesus. All three movements- that of John, of Jesus, and of the Qumran materials- seems to use the same texts to describe the messianic age and its telltale signs. Now, based on the newly released 'On Resurrection' all three groups seem to share the technical list of criteria for identification of the Messiah." James D. Tabor and Michael O. Wise, "4Q521 'On Resurrection' And The Synoptic Gospel Tradition: A Preliminary Study" James H. Charlesworth ed., *Qumran Questions*, (Sheffield Academic Press: England, 1995). Pgs 160, 163. What is

fulfillment of Scripture perhaps did highly suggest to those both willing and perceptive that here, quite likely, Jesus held claim to be more than a Galilean teacher. He was seen as prophet, but even more likely too he was also staking claim to his kingship (confirming what all four Evangelists relate as the Roman placard upon his cross: *Jesus of Nazareth: King of the Jews*, Mark 15:26).

significant for present purposes, is that Jesus' messianic self-consciousness (as reflected in John the Baptists' questioning) should be seen as highly authentic given first-century conceptions. Of course, this does not immediately mean that Jesus believed this of himself. But given the weight of plausibility, coherence, and multiple attestation, to name a few criteria, the burden of proof increasingly falls upon those who wish to maintain that Jesus did not see himself as the messiah of God, his special, chosen, anointed agent sent to bring about the new age. All this to say, Jesus understood both his calling as Yahweh's Messiah, and consciously and persistently sought to appropriate O.T. texts to his mission. Zechariah 9:9 (Mark 11:1-11) is but one instance of this. Critical debate today centers around the historical development of the 'Messiah' (that is, how does it develop from a kingship to metaphor to the era of Hasmonean and Roman eschatology) and the nature of this hycm (metaphorical, individual, corporate, etc.). For an introduction to this issue and divergence of opinion concerning the Qumran literature, see: Joseph A. Fitzmeyer S.J., *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Origins in Studies*, 73-110, and John J. Collins, "The Nature Of Messianism In The Light Of The Dead Sea Scrolls" 199-217, and Philip R. Davies, "Judaism In The Dead Sea Scrolls: The Case Of The Messiah, 220-232. Timothy H. Lim, ed., *The Dead Sea Scrolls In Their Historical Context*, (T&T Clark: Edinburgh, 2000). John J. Collins states a succinct and insightful summary: "There was never any orthodoxy on the subject of Messianism and the Hebrew word (anointed one) and its cognates could be used in various ways. Yet some ideas and expectations were widely shared." "What Was Distinctive About Messianic Expectation At Qumran?" *The Bible And The Dead Sea Scrolls, Vol. 2, The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Qumran Community*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Baylor University Press: Waco, Texas, 2006), 73 Joseph A. Fitzmyer, after reviewing a host of relevant material ranging from the O.T., extrabiblical Jewish writings, the N.T. material, and the Mishnah, Targums and other writings, offers this succinct analysis of the fluidity of the term 'messiah': "To sum up, first, the Jewish belief, one must stress that the expectation of a Jewish Messiah was not of one form, for we have seen that the expectation envisaged at times a kingly and priestly figure, a Messiah of Aaron and a Messiah of Israel, a Messiah of David and a Messiah of Joseph (or Ephraim). Moreover, it even cast the prophet Elijah, who was thought to return, as an awaited High Priest. The dominant expectation, however, was one that awaited a human kingly figure who was (and is) to bring deliverance, at once political, economic, and spiritual, to the Jewish people, and through them peace, prosperity, and righteousness to all humanity. Moreover, in the *Babylonian Talmud* such a figure was also said to be among the seven things created before the world came to be. That means that at times the Messiah was thought of as a preexistent being. He was also considered eventually as the King Messiah, destined to fulfill the role of the child of whom Isaiah spoke and described as "Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa 9:5). For in his day all peoples would be gathered to worship the God of Israel, who was regarded as the sole deliverer and redeemer of humanity. This aspect of redemption varied at times when some Jewish sages understood the Messiah as a corporate personality or believed that redemption would take place without a personal Messiah—a form of Messianism without a Messiah. In all of this Jewish belief the expectation was (and is) still focused on the future: a Messiah still to come." Joseph A. Fitzmyer S.J. *The One Who Is To Come* (William B. Eerdmans Pub. CO: Grand Rapids, 2007), 182-183.

Mark 11: 11: The A-triumphal Entry and Roman Rule

It is here that we face the most interesting climax in Mark's literary style. It is Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem and largely due to the Markan narrative; it is often called the 'a-triumphal entry (Mk 11:11).¹¹⁰ That is, the climax to Jesus' approach is quite disappointing in its consequence. Morna Hooker's comment is revealing to this effect: "Jesus' arrival in the temple seems something of an anticlimax, confirming the suggestion that the triumphal entry was not a messianic demonstration."¹¹¹ Moreover, at least one Evangelist explicitly mentions that at the first, even the disciples did not grasp the full significance of this event (Jn 12:16; see also: Jn. 2:22 and 14:26).¹¹² In any case, Mark further narrates (Mk. 11:11-26) that this entry was but one step in Jesus 'sizing up' the adequacy or receptivity of Jerusalem, to his person and plan, notably centering on the temple precincts. Mark notes thus, in 11:11 that Jesus 'looked around at everything' in the temple complex. This word, περιβλεπεσθαι occurs six times in Mark (3:5, 34, 5:32, 9:29, 10:23, 11:11), and in each case spoken of Jesus it refers to his authority to understand and evaluate the situation. In this case, Jesus' 'discernment' of the temple complex fails to produce a congenial state; both for Jesus and for Jerusalem. Mark's subsequent enacted parable of the barren fig tree and subsequent temple drama both confirm the disparity which Jesus faced upon his arrival. Here then, the Markan narrative

¹¹⁰ Against the narratives in Matthew and John, James Edwards writes: "Mark's account is noteworthy for what does not happen." according to our modern sensibilities and knowledge. James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, 338.

¹¹¹ Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel According To Saint Mark*, 260.

¹¹² This leads D.A. Carson to state: "... far from decreasing the historical plausibility of the narrative, the disciple's misunderstanding increases it. Not only is their failure to comprehend the nature of Jesus' kingship and the inevitability of the cross universally attested in the Gospels, that failure was also something that could not be misunderstood after Jesus' death and glorification." D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 434. This is entirely plausible given the fact that disciples were 'trained' by their rabbi and were under tutelage for some time seeking to apprehend their masters ways and wisdom.

of the triumphal entry ends. The Markan text, and importantly, its context, has been heard. It remains now, to analyze the Triumphal Entry according to ‘Third Quest’ criteria.

Applying Historical Criteria to the Markan narrative

At the outset, it would be helpful to note briefly what has been evidenced. In answer to skeptical claims, the Markan text does in fact begin to frame an answer to critical concerns. By carefully listening to the Markan text, one finds that it supports feast-day celebrations, Israelite motifs, and consequently fits in nicely with historical contexts. Thus, there is nothing inherent in the text which demands obvious recognition by the Romans that this Jesus was their specific directive of worship, that the crowds were of necessity of such a magnitude to compel the garrisons to immediate action or suspicion, or that Jesus intently set to display by force his claim of kingship.¹¹³ There are no substantial objections set against the owner lending the donkey, the singing of the festive Psalm, Jesus’ use of prophecy, nor even the lack of Roman intervention. What we have in fact, might be perceived more adequately, as a prophet of Israel who was joined by a host of Psalm-singing worshippers enroute to Jerusalem. It appears that the Markan text is entirely accurate. Moreover, common sense balances the objections by leaning toward the impression that individuals in Jerusalem knew what they were doing. Thus, Roman soldiers may well have been familiar with feasts attended by the singing of Psalms (having heard them on numerous occasions). Moreover, such feasts would

¹¹³ The approximate number of crowds during a feast is of course, unknown. Richard Horsley might be closer to the truth when he writes: “That Galilee was no longer under the political jurisdiction of the Temple and high priesthood in Jerusalem raises the question of just what sort of relationship continued between Galileans and Jerusalem. Since virtually no information exists on the issue, we should be cautious about making assumptions. For example, studies of pilgrimage to festivals in the Temple such as Passover have grossly overestimated the number of pilgrims in general and the number from Galilee in particular. There is literary evidence for some pilgrims from Galilee, but the numbers were likely small.” Richard A. Horsley, *Archaeology, History and Society In Galilee: The Social Contexts Of Jesus And The Rabbis* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 1996), 33.

inevitably produce a heightened sense of religious and national hopes. However, these same Romans may well have been wise and attentive enough to know what was considered dangerous enough to generate immediate action (having been trained in some manner to perceptively monitor the city), and what actions were of such a consequence as to produce swift reprimand.¹¹⁴ It is true that Josephus narrates some would-be prophets who were summarily suppressed and executed, but a study of the contextual data seems to reveal that there was an important certain sense of discernment exercised from the Roman military upon Jewish ideologies during this pivotal time under Pontius Pilate.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ E. Mary Smallwood narrates a plausible chronological scenario in which Pilate, if Jesus' death occurred at 33 AD, would be more eager to consciously and gently approach the religious sensibilities of the Jews. E. Mary Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule: From Pompey To Diocletian, A Study In Political Relations* (Brill Academic Pub. Inc: Boston, 2001), 165-171.

¹¹⁵ See: Ben Witherington, *New Testament History: A Narrative Account* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic Books, 2001), 107-11. And, Paul Barnett, *Jesus and the Rise of Early Christianity: A History of New Testament Times* (Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 143-148. Barnett writes: "How, then, are we to reconcile this Pilate with the tame figure depicted in the Gospel accounts of the crucifixion? The most probably answer is that by the time of Jesus' trial Pilate was quite vulnerable. During his first six years as governor, the Roman world was effectively ruled by L. Aelius Sejanus, the praetorian prefect. At the time, Tiberius was emperor in name only, living in semiretirement as a recluse on the Island of Capri in the bay of Naples. Sejanus in Rome was de facto emperor. Sejanus was known to have been anti-Semitic... It appears to be no coincidence that 'Pilate decided to overturn the laws of the Jews' at the very time the anti-Semitic Sejanus was at the height of his powers in Rome. However, in 31, all this was to change. In that year Sejanus was executed. Thereafter Tiberius regained control of the empire. Tiberius, like Augustus his predecessor, had been well-disposed to the Jews. But now it had come to his attention that his Jewish subjects in Italy and the provinces had suffered oppression at the hands of the governors. Tiberius wrote at once to his provincial governors insisting that they treat his Jewish subjects with the fairness they had come to expect... To no provincial governor would these words have been more appropriate than to the prefect of Judea, home of the Jewish people..." pg 146. It should be noted here, that even conservative evangelical scholars disagree concerning the date of Jesus' ministry and death. Barnett's late date for Jesus' ministry (30-33 AD) allows for this interpretation especially (a date of his death at 30 AD places Pilate in a more conducive anti-Semitic setting). For an ancient summary of Pilate's role as prefect see: Josephus' *Antiquities*, Book XVIII ch. 3-4, Philo *legatio ad gaium* 16-161, 299-305, and Tacitus *Annals* 15.44.4. According to these sources; Pilate gained his position in 26 AD from Sejanus (who was then commander of the Praetorian guard) and was a vicious, greedy individual (according to Josephus and Philo who consistently paint him with unflattering remarks). Upon securing his position, Pilate is well-known for several highly disruptive acts. These include: his attempt to set up Roman standards with the figure of the emperor in Jerusalem (seen as emperor worship by pious Jews) which was revoked only once Pilate acknowledged that, even in the face of Roman punishment by death, many Jews demonstrated fierce loyalty to their religious convictions. This initial event is not to be confused with a later episode in which Pilate set up votive shields in Jerusalem with Tiberius' name inscribed, which many interpret as symbolic of Pilate's attempt to please Tiberius after the anti-Semitic Sejanus was executed. Hearing direct complaint of this particular action, Tiberius ordered Pilate to remove these at once. Pilate also seized money from the temple treasury to build an aqueduct. Thus time, Pilate shut down protests by planting soldiers in the angry

As mentioned earlier, according to Mark, there is nothing in the text that demands such an immediate or harsh squelching by the authorities. Mark's a-triumphal entrance into the temple precincts further attest to this fact. And so, what the Markan narrative relates, is that we find instead, is a meek and lowly prophet, teacher, and king. One who rides in on a donkey, enters the holy city, adjudicates the alarming situation of the temple complex, and one who finds safe passage and finds a certain level of tranquility in their evening back in Bethany. As we shall see, there is more to this story, which historical criteria must examine. Perhaps surprisingly, it is here under the service of critical criteria that the church finds both support for authenticity, and plausible windows into that fateful week and how the Triumphal entry fit causally into Jesus' crucifixion.

Multiple Attestation

Multiple attestation is an important criterion among scholars. As noted, it operates under the assumption that the more an event/saying is attested from various independent

crowds and beating and killing many. Last, Pilate's ultimate provocation occurred in Samaria in 36 AD when a Samaritan prophet led his follower up to Mt. Gerazim in the belief that they would then find sacred vessels of Moses. Because several in the crowd followed with weapons, Pilate swiftly sent his troops to block their ascent and hastily killed many and imprisoned others. The Samaritans consequently sent complaint to the Roman prefect in Syria, Vitellius, who sent Pilate to Rome to answer such charges (this ending Pilate's rule in Judea). Luke 13:1 mentions another episode, that of Pilate 'mixing blood of Galileans with sacrifices'. For a helpful introduction to these events, see: James S. McLaren, *Power And Politics In Palestine: The Jews and the Governing of their Land 100 BC- AD 70*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series, 63 (Sheffield Academic Press: England, 1991), 80-101. As with all historical reconstructions, there are a number of interpretations concerning Pilate's encounter with Jesus and his general tenor with the Judean populace (Pilate was inexperienced, arrogant, vulnerable, weak, etc.). Warren Carter views the Evangelists' portrait of Pilate as a powerful Roman leader who aligned himself with the Jewish aristocracy. According to the redaction of the Evangelists, Carter sees Pilate as either one who deliberately manipulates the crowd to ask for what he and the elite desire (as in Mark and Matthew); or one who defiantly ignores the disturbance that Jesus' is creating between him and the elite until all other options are lost (as in Luke); or Pilate appears as the sole victor of a competing game with elite and locals (John). Warren Carter, *Pontius Pilate: Portrait of a Roman Governor* (Liturgical press: Collegeville, 2003). Carter views the powers in Judea as typical Roman machination where the elites in Jerusalem were in league with the upper-class provincial officials, which in this case, were composed of Jewish religious leaders who held authority both in religion and finances with the Temple-taxes. Jesus, as the rest of the general populace, had no access to any equity unless do desired by the Ruler. For further information on Pilate, see: Helen K. Bond, *Pontius Pilate in History and Interpretation*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1998), chapters 4-7. Also: E. Mary Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, 156-171. Judea was place under direct Roman rule in 6 AD (Caponius was the first prefect, Pilate the 6th: 26-36 AD).

sources the higher its degree of authenticity. Now of course, depending on source criticism and dependency theories the Synoptics agreement on the triumphal entry might not furnish much assistance (all three are commonly seen as both genre-dependant and source-dependant). But here it is especially noteworthy that even John's Gospel attests to the triumphal entry (because John, as noted earlier, is often seen as an independent Gospel). Thus, the criteria of multiple attestations, operating under its own given assumptions, would ordinarily concede that the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem initially appears to be worthy of further consideration, rather than immediately assigning it largely to the creative function of the early church.¹¹⁶ Obviously, no one criterion can support the weight of authenticity, but the fact that the triumphal entry fares quite well against this initial criterion applied to it, means that one may well hold out hope for its future promise.

¹¹⁶ Theissen and Merz, too, object to Meier. After discussing the three prevalent criteria utilized currently (coherence, multiple attestation and difference), state about the criteria of multiple attestation: "The criterion of multiple attestation cannot be criticized, but can always be used only in connection with other indicators." Pg 115. They go on, however, to state the issue facing all reconstruction and usage of criteria which historians face. We would do well to heed: "All the individual concrete statements within a description of Jesus have different degrees of probability. A permanent aura of hypothesis necessarily hangs over any picture of Jesus. Therefore we should be reconciled to the hypothetical character of our knowledge. For not only our pictures of Jesus but our whole lives can be regarded as hypotheses, as an attempt to correspond to an unconditional reality. The whole stream of living and being can be understood as a chain of trial and error. If the hypothetical is so deeply rooted in the structure of reality, why should we take offence at it?" Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 121. Bart Ehrman, quite interestingly writes: "Even though this account is multiply attested (see Mark 11:1-10, John 12:12-19), it is very difficult to accept as historically accurate. The days before Passover were a tense and potentially dangerous time in the view of the Roman authorities... If Jesus actually entered the city with such fanfare, crowds shouting their support of him as their new ruler, the king who fulfills the prophecies (who would, therefore, need to overthrow the present ruler and armies!), it's nearly impossible to understand why he wasn't arrested and taken out of the way immediately... We are on more solid ground when determining what Jesus did once he arrived in Jerusalem..." Bart D. Ehrman, *Jesus: apocalyptic prophet of the new millennium*, 210, 211 Somewhat similarly, Ehrman is caught in seeking to apply criteria that appear problematic. Speaking of the Lord's Supper, he writes: "it's very difficult to know whether this 'institution' of the Lord's Supper is historical. On the one hand, it is multiply attested in independent sources, even though they disagree concerning the precise words that were spoken. And on these sources, Paul who claimed to know people who had been there at the time, was writing just twenty years after the event. On the other hand, the accounts seem so heavily 'Christianized' with the doctrine of the saving effect of Jesus' death (a doctrine that developed, of course, after he died), that it is hard to know what here we is history and what is later theology." 215. Is this not a case against unbiased assumptions in utilizing criteria?

Dissimilarity

Another criterion which, though dominant in the 'Second Quest', still assumes great prominence is that of *dissimilarity*. As noted earlier, this criteria operates under the assumption that authenticity is more surely established when sayings/events find no direct correlation or support among cultural contexts: especially among predecessors or followers, and in this case, first-century Palestine and the early church of Jesus. This criterion may be applied directly to the Markan narrative. Do we find evidences of sayings or actions that evince no direct and known relation to first-century Palestine of the early church? As we have seen, the Markan text seems to include what presents a certain degree of *similarity*. That is, from the Hallel Psalms sung, to the waving of palm branches, to the geographical locales and surroundings, Mark's Gospel evidences a high mark of similarity (or plausibility) when it is considered against the backdrop of what occurred among first-century festive pilgrims enroute to Jerusalem. This, in and of itself, expresses itself toward greater confidence of authenticity among Third Questers who deliberately seek direct correlations with what is known of an era and what is subsequently supported through other sources. This is what we find to be exemplary in Mark: the way his narrative quite easily finds itself among what is known and expressed in first-century Palestine.

However, the Markan narrative also functions to fulfill the criterion of dissimilarity in one important point, which point, as noted, becomes the chief message of the text: Jesus riding upon the donkey. L.A. Losie writes to this end:

Jesus' decision to ride into the city on an animal... is a 'startling and ostentatious reversal of the normal constraint which would have obliged him to enter on foot'

(Harvey 129; c.f. m. Hag. 1:1; b. Hag. Ba; m. Ber. 9.5), and since the messianic interpretation of Zechariah 9:9 is not attested in Judaism until the fourth century A.D., it seems likely that the memory of this provocative act has its origins in the historical event.¹¹⁷

Of course, contemporary knowledge of Jewish distinctives during feasts is minimal (especially modes of transportation), but the fact that transportation upon a donkey into Jerusalem finds no express importance among first-century Jewish sources and the fact that it finds no importance to the early church for any doctrinal distinctive or emphasis certainly merits a further look into the special value of this account. Using the criterion of dissimilarity in the light of what is known of the early church presents a case for assuming that this event provoked no special need for them or *Sitz im Leben*. In fact, we find no prominence either to the unbroken donkey, and only one mention this portion of the Hillel Psalm in the early church.¹¹⁸ The silence surrounding Jesus' usage of an unbroken donkey is, in the end, golden.¹¹⁹ This, at the very least, should alert us to arbitrary judgments which deem this event as inauthentic. Such considerations of dissimilarity lead scholars such as R.T. France to write:

¹¹⁷ L.A. Losie, "Triumphal Entry" Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight gen. eds., *Dictionary Of Jesus And The Gospels*, 859.

¹¹⁸ The Didache 10:6. Moreover, if Mark was written, as many scholars believe, to Roman Christians, one inevitably wonders what significance the relating of the unbroken donkey would have served for them.

¹¹⁹ Of course, the critic might still remark that Jesus did not intention this donkey display to denote his high status or, especially, his messianic self-consciousness because of the events during Passion Week in which he precipitated his own rejection by the religious authorities. Thus, Jesus' understanding of the office of the Messiah was not in keeping with first-century inclinations (if one follows one major interpretation of the Dead Sea Scrolls, for instance; of a figure anointed and glorious in establishing the rule of Yahweh, and not destined to rejection). It is true that the royal Psalms largely portray a victorious warrior of Yahweh (of the Royal Psalms: 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132, and 144, only four contain no explicit militaristic language: 45, 72, 101, 132). Thus, critics might note that Jesus' actions and expectations demonstrate his misguided zeal or foretelling ineptness. However, it is in Royal Psalms such as Psalm 72 (one containing non-militaristic language), that particular insight into the creativity (hence to a degree, his supposed dissimilarity) and plausibility of Jesus' intentions are best seen (as seen in Jesus' concern to validate his ministry around the canonical heritage). In fact, Craig C. Boyles finds in the Psalm much that commends itself to authenticating Jesus' ministry and foundational to the New Testament. See: Craig C. Boyles, "Psalm 72's Contribution to the Messianic Ideal", *Eschatology, Messianism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Peter W. Flint (William B. Eerdmans Pub., co: Grand Rapids, 1997), 23-40. Therefore, it will do no good to

“If, then, Jesus chose, on this one occasion in his public life, to ride into the city, he was aiming to be noticed.”¹²⁰ France continues: “The procession towards Jerusalem and the attack on the temple traders are blatantly public acts which effectively throw down the gauntlet to the Jerusalem authorities and force them to respond.”¹²¹

In the end, with all the relevant knowledge of first-century feasts and expectations, Jesus’ action on the donkey was unusual.

Coherence

One must inevitably ask: What purpose is served by narrating the transportation by a donkey? Does it fit what we know to be the case of Jesus’ person and mission? Here we are on the edge of discovering a high degree of plausibility in terms of correlating such an action with Jesus’ distinctive person and mission: that of seeking the lost and outcasts, that of being the suffering servant. Specifically, the issue here is whether the facts of Jesus’ mission and life, almost universally agreed upon by critical scholars finds consistency with the triumphal entry narrative. To take one list, E.P. Sanders and Margaret Davies state several well-attested facts about Jesus of Nazareth:

1. Jesus expected ‘the kingdom of God’ either as a dramatic cosmic event, or as a new social order- or both, one leading to the other.
2. He saw his own mission as being the call of Israel to the kingdom.
3. he meant the inclusion of all Israel, both the lost ten tribes (not the symbolism of the twelve disciples) and the present ‘lost sheep of the house of Israel’.
4. He saw his work as continuing John’s, but with a difference. John preached repentance and practiced abstinence. Jesus sought sinners, did not dwell on their failings, and was known as one who ate and drank with them.
5. He believed that love of the neighbor included not only love of the outcast, but also love of the enemy.
6. He did not himself call Gentiles, but this was a reasonable continuation of his work.
7. he thought that the new order demanded new ethical standards, and he (for example) forbade or strongly discouraged divorce, possibly looking to the order of creation as the standard of the new age. We emphasize that this is by no means all that can be known about Jesus, but these points are important for understanding the particularity of his

¹²⁰ R.T. France, *The Gospel Of Mark*, 429. France, in fact, calls this entry a “blatant messianic self-advertisement”.

¹²¹ R.T. France, *The Gospel Of Mark*, 428.

mission, when compared with that of others, and for grasping his importance of history. We know quite a lot about Jesus- and about the synoptic gospels. They repay the work which they require.¹²²

Does the Triumphal entry find correlation with these, or is this narrative at variance with the Jesus previously established by other criteria?¹²³ It appears that this account, if anything, only further serves to supplement or reinforce scholarly consensus regarding Jesus' self-consciousness and his mission. This is seen, not only in view of his gentle and peaceable mission (coming as gentle king upon the donkey), but in view of his person (one who validates himself according to sacred Scriptures and announces his authority over against that of other religious or political standards). In the end, it turns out that then Triumphal Entry establishes nothing inconsistent with the general tenor of Jesus of Nazareth, that is, according to what has been previously conceded as authentic. The issues which the Triumphal Entry presents are quite coherent with the authentic Jesus:

¹²² E.P. Sanders and Margaret Davies, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels*, 336. What the historian must seek to discover then, is to ask what Jesus precisely set out to accomplish, gathered from both his sayings and his actions. In this case, the Passover meal with his disciples, his clearing of the Temple, and his enacted parable of the triumphal entry all plausibly signify that he saw himself as one who would accomplish the restoration/redemption of Israel. We have then, a Jesus who preached of the immanent kingdom, welcomes sinners, and enacted salvation, not through a withdrawn hope in God's working and so waiting for it, but instead voluntarily, and in connection with God's plan, advanced the kingdom through what he saw was his ransom-death. Of course, this is contested on grounds of first-century conceptions (garnering adequate expressions of Jewish hope, and their comprehension of sins' requirements and the corporate needs of Israel). However much one seemingly advocates dissimilarity in other areas of Jesus research, one must extend the courtesy to Jesus here as well. Perhaps it was his radical ingenuity (although in many ways, consistent with Old Testament understandings) which produced a salvific understanding of his death. This in turn, radically produced a church, through his resurrection, which passionately spread news of his person and mission. This is all to say that the evangelical understanding of Jesus' sacrificial death is not merely a construct, but can be adequately defended on authentic sayings/deeds of Jesus as found in the Gospels and woven with the criterion of coherence and plausibility.

¹²³ Common agreement among a wide spectrum of scholars Jesus frequently centers upon: (1) his teaching on the 'kingdom', (2) his use of parables, (3) his relationship with those marginalized in society (and subsequently, his open-table fellowship), (4) his calling of disciples (and with great probability on there being Twelve in number and seen as disciples of this rabbi, Jesus of Nazareth), and (5) his rejection and execution by the religious authorities in Jerusalem under the power and diction of Rome. The point here being that the triumphal entry fits quite nicely into all five confirmed essentials regarding Jesus. Whether one concedes to its immediate authenticity or later correlates it to the criterion of coherence, it is an event that is quite natural in the setting and originality of Jesus of Nazareth.

one who comes as claimant of king/messiah, prophet, (and perhaps here as well, priest) but is remarkably placid in his presentations, one who validates his work and personhood according to Jewish tradition and is surrounded by large crowds who are both cognizant and oblivious to his true ambitions. This is the authentic Jesus, and it is the strength of the Triumphal Entry that it supports the vision of Jesus as previously established both by critical scholars and the Evangelists themselves.

Plausibility (rejection/execution)

“...a good hypothesis about Jesus’ intention and his relationship with his contemporaries is that it should offer a connection between his activity and his death... it is conceivable that Jesus taught one thing, that he was killed for something else, and that the disciples, after the resurrection, made of his life and death still something else, so that there is no causal thread between his life, his death and the Christian movement. This is possible, but it is not satisfying historically. Further, I think- and this is far more important than a priori suppositions- the evidence shows that there was a causal connection: that there is a substantial coherence between what Jesus had in mind, how he saw his relationship to his nation and his people’s religion, the reason for his death, and the beginning of the Christian movement.”¹²⁴

What do one find to be the case in the Markan triumphal entry concerning the criterion of plausibility? Directly stated: Is there any correlation between the triumphal entry and Jesus’ trial and death? It is here that the triumphal entry too, serves to further strengthen the correlation between the Jewish authorities’ resistance to Jesus and his eventual execution and rejection by the Roman prefect. In the Markan narrative, the seeming silence in the temple at the triumphal entry at Mark 11:11 and the subsequent

¹²⁴ E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 22. Sanders says much the same on pgs 57-58. In fact, Sanders’ first focus of the book begins with the temple controversy and his subsequent death. He writes earlier, in an ironic tone against those who refuse to see the causal nexus between his intentions, his teachings and his death: “One would have to think that Jesus quite literally did not know what he was doing. He called disciples simply to be with him, he taught simply to promote repentance, he interfered with temple practice because of a dislike of business dealings in the temple area, he was executed as a rebel or rabble rouser; and the disciples, who expected nothing in particular to come of his ministry, were galvanized into unity and activity solely by the resurrection experiences: it is possible, but it is not likely.” Pg. 58.

explicit desire of the authorities to destroy him in Mark 11:18 with the temple cleansing (preceded by Jesus' fig pronouncement excursus) all seem to contribute to key events in the passion week which led to his ultimate demise. This is where the strength of the other Evangelists' details serve well, and where a priori judgments regarding their redactions are faulty (often viewed as their subsequent additions and revisions to the account: i.e., not factual but thematic). That is, it is here that dismissal of the other Evangelists' narration of the triumphal entry as simply redactional serves, perhaps unintentionally, to undermine important connections of Jesus' ministry and the causal nexus leading to his impending death. For, it Matthew, Luke and John who speak explicitly of the offense of the triumphal entry (Mt. 21:12-17, Lk. 19:37-47, Jn 12:12-19). Thus, against the implicit belief of many who hold that the evangelists do not demonstrate a direct correlation between Jesus' rejection by the authorities and his death, the evidence points to the contrary. Even being constricted to Mark's account alone in no way undermines this thesis. At the least, as has been mentioned, Mark's proclivity to compress events and details still upholds what is implied and suggested in the text (following Mark's distinctive literary style). That is, the triumphal entry, portraying admiring crowds, gathered around one who rides an unbroken donkey in O.T. significance and grand self-consciousness, sufficiently warrants the reader to expect that this event will produce notable effects.¹²⁵ For Mark (compared to the other Evangelists), it seems, the ripple-

¹²⁵ Concerning the triumphal entry, one author's interpretation was that though it: "...ended in the Temple precincts in an anti-climactic manner, [it] may have been Jesus' offer to the Jerusalem priesthood to serve as the anointed of David (i.e., the 'Messiah of Israel') alongside the anointed High Priest (i.e., the 'Messiah of Aaron'). The High Priest Ciaphas and his fellow priests, however, would have none of it, and so Jesus was ignored. In response to this snub, Jesus took action in the Temple precincts and criticized Temple polity (Mark 11:15-18), at which time he evidently spoke of the temple's doom (Mark 13:2; 14:58), warning that the priestly administration would be taken from Ciaphas and his colleagues and given to others who were more worthy (Mark 12:1-2)." Craig A. Evans and Peter W. Flint eds., *Eschatology, Messianism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 8. This view, of course, also seeks to implement the Dead Sea

effect is restrained. Subdued perhaps, but essential to demonstrate Jesus as perceptive of his person, mission and authority over the temple, to which this event quickly rescinds.

Craig Evans writes:

In my view Jesus' criticism of the temple authorities may or may not have been sufficient to provoke these authorities in seeking his death. It may or may not have been sufficient to persuade Pilate, the Roman governor, to comply with their wishes. But had criticism of the temple authorities, even with a prediction of the temple's destruction, led to Jesus' death, it still would not explain the crucifixion of Jesus as 'king of the Jews' (Mark 15:26 and parallels), a tradition that most scholars are prepared to accept as genuine. But because the religious authorities recognized the importance of the wording of the inscription placed on, above, or in the vicinity of Jesus' cross, they most likely handed Jesus over to Pilate not simply because he criticized and perhaps even threatened them, but because he acknowledged that he was Israel's Messiah, the king of the kingdom that he had proclaimed throughout his ministry.¹²⁶

scrolls penchant for a Messianic diarchy (one of David and one of Aaron and priestly: CD 12:23-13:1, 14:18-19, 19:10-11, 20:1, 4 Q252 5:1-4). See pgs 5-9 especially for a helpful introduction to this issue. It is also helpful to note that Jesus was not alone in foretelling the destruction of the second temple and a transference of its corrupt elite. See Craig A. Evans, "Predictions Of The Destruction Of The Herodian Temple In The Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Scrolls And Related Texts" *Qumran Questions*, Ed. James H. Charlesworth (Sheffield Academic Press: England, 1995), pgs. 92-150. Evans further notes that Mark 13:2 concerning the temple's destruction is highly authentic and that Jesus was not alone in predicting its demise. He cites several relevant sources (being careful to note, that either the temple *or* Jerusalem might be the referent in several cases): Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs [T. Levi 10.3, 14.1-15.3, 16.1-5], Enoch 1 [90.28-29, 91.11-13], the Sibylline Oracles [3.665], the Qumran [1 QPHab 9. 2-7, 4 QpNah 1.1-3] Josephus [referring to Jesus son of Ananias in War 6.5.3], and following the precedent the O.T. prophets such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel. For a helpful guide to the Dead Sea Scrolls, see: Geza Vermes, *An Introduction To The Dead Sea Scrolls* (Fortress Press: Minneapolis, 1999).

¹²⁶ Michael J. Wilkins and J.P. Moreland Eds., *Jesus Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus* (Zondervan Publishing: Grand Rapids, 1995), 109. Evans notes especially here, the crowds' singing of the Hallel Psalms during his triumphal entry, and *The Psalms of Solomon* 17:21-18:9 which expected a Messiah figure to cleanse Jerusalem. This is also seen in the Markan narrative of the parable of the wicked tenants, see: Mk 12:1-8, Mt. 21:33-39, Lk. 20:9-16 (Mark, of course, is constantly providing his readers with the perspective that Jesus has authority). For a fascinating analysis of the way this parable was understood by the religious authorities in Jesus' day and the subsequent authenticity of Jesus' parable here (as found in Isaiah 5:1-7 and the Qumran- 4Q500), see: Craig Evans, "Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls" 97-99 *Eschatology, Messianism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Peter W. Flint (William B. Eerdmans Pub., co: Grand Rapids, 1997), 97-99. Even the Jesus Seminar Fellows, whom many consider radical in their skepticism, nevertheless find the parable of the tenants, as found in the Gospel of Thomas- no. 65, to have genuine marks of authenticity. In keeping with their presuppositions, and against the Gospels' tenant parable, only the Gospel of Thomas version fares better than a doubtful cast (cast predominantly in pink). Moore disturbing than this, however, is the fact that *if* the Gospel of Thomas was not discovered, the parable of the tenants in all three Gospels would have been consigned to a black vote (not genuine of Jesus): "The discovery of Thomas prompted scholars to read the story in a wholly new light. It was earlier thought that the parable might have been a Christian creation. Now it appears that a simple, non-allegorical version can be ascribed to Jesus." *The Five Gospels*, 510. See also: 101, 233-234, 378. In effect, because of the Nag Hammadi discovery, the Jesus Seminar candidly confesses that there may now be marks of genuineness in the tenant parable (though overlaid with Christian allegory). Here then,

We seem to be held then, in the tension of seeking to attribute wisdom, or at the least the ability to perceive what seems to modern man as unperceivable. However, it seems likely that the major characters attending the triumphal entry were better versed in assessing their environment than we can decipher as distanced two-thousand years apart. One would then seek to attribute to Jesus a willful attentiveness and self-consciousness of both his person and mission. But perhaps the same courtesy should be extended to the Roman troops (as those capable possessing perceptive skills and constantly negotiating what things are beyond the bounds of Passover Feast celebration). Again too, that courtesy should well be as well given to the *Jewish* religious authorities (who quite likely knew, more than *Roman* soldiers, exactly what the signs of Jesus and singing of the crowds might well have implicated).¹²⁷ Last, one should extend due credence to the festive crowds.¹²⁸

the ‘accidents’ of history (the fact that we have found another early source) have become the standard by which to judge the authenticity of the Gospels. But this reasoning is clearly biased, portrays a fundamental distrust of the Gospels, and exposes the nature of the burden of proof necessary for the Jesus Seminar Fellows. Dare we assign much of the past to suspicion (black/grey votes) unless archaeology supports our own preconceptions, and that it does so with a considerable amount of manuscript to our own liking? For a helpful critique, see: Tom Holmen, “A Theologically Disinterested Quest? On the Origins of the ‘Third Quest’ for the Historical Jesus” *Studia Theologica* 55, no. 2 (2001): 175-197. Regardless of such issues, even the Jesus Seminar concedes in this case to what is crucial toward understanding something of the nature and mission of Jesus. That is, if the tenant parable is possibly authentic to Jesus (according to Thomas and cast in pink), then one must ask: unless Jesus is speaking a random and purposeless parable, it seems reasonable to assume that he is, in fact, the son of the parable and the issue of authority becomes critical (which the Gospels writers correctly note as the contextual key of the narrative). Thus, Jesus is the rightful heir; the standard by which all others must align themselves. At the very least, this suggests that Jesus saw in his person and work an authoritative and climactic ministry. It also expresses the underlying power and eloquence of Jesus’ parables. In all this, the historian must provide a coherent and plausible account of Jesus- it will do no good to dismiss Jesus as advocating simple aphorisms without giving due recourse to the radical nature of his self-conscious mission and nature. So, the trilemma returns. We have moved closer to what Jesus himself claims, and not, merely, what others have supposed of him (church).

¹²⁷ As Sacha Stern notes: “It is to be expected that Jews and Romans will not always have understood each other, either because of the linguistic, cultural and religious differences, or because of the intrinsically different perspectives or ruler and of ruled.” Martin Goodman ed., *Jews in a Greco-Roman World*, (Oxford University Press: New York, 1998), 242. It should be noted here too, that Rome’s perception of Judea was somewhat different from that of its other regions. Thus, for instance, Rome chose an equestrian-rank prefect over a senatorial member to direct rule evidences that Judea was viewed as a land who adhered to its own customs in a special manner, or was remote and somewhat barbarous compared to normal Roman

In any event, this would not have been the first time Jesus had veiled his intent and message around parables, and metaphors, much to the consternation of those who sought direct and explicit opposition as grounds for rejection. Against throngs that sought his kingship, or authorities that demanded his demise, Jesus in superb wisdom spoke of confrontation and usurpation, of great reversals and misperceptions, but cloaked all in a silent eloquence. It was understood by the rulers, rejoiced of through the weak, but carried along by the winds of a method that could hardly produce direct allegations. The triumphal entry was perhaps one of the last of these remarkable demonstrations and protestations. And it was perhaps, either due in part to Jesus' cognizance that the Temple audience did not properly receive their king that immediately fostered the inevitable

means of governance. Then, too, the legate of Syria, it appears, had legions at his command (In the days of Tiberius 4 legions in Syria= 5,000-6,000 troops per a legion- comprised only or Roman citizens) and was in greater authority than the Judean governors who had only auxiliaries (for Pilate 6-7 units= 500 men per unit, often taken from local districts- Caesarea and Sebaste and often not Roman citizens, though leaders like centurions often were Roman citizens). Of course, Caesarea was the base of power in Judea, with one unit of men stationed in Jerusalem. This is not to infer that Judea was seemingly insignificant, or outside of Roman jurisdiction. For it was a province of Rome (and in commercial interests, for instance, was quite important, as in Galilee with its grain bounty). A. N. Sherwin-White summarizes the necessary components for a Roman province: "the decisive elements are three: permanent military occupation, regular taxation, and Roman supervision of public order, including jurisdiction and municipal government, By all these tests Judea was a province." A.N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society And Roman Law In The New Testament*, from the Sarum Lectures 1960-1961, (Wipf & Stock Pub.: Oregon, 2004). The complexity and care by which the Romans oversaw the land and its religious customs is clearly stated here, and is of special significance in consideration of Jesus' triumphal entry: "Within the limits, which were stated in the very regulations themselves, the Jewish people enjoyed even yet a very considerable measure of freedom in home affairs and self-administration...of greater importance is the fact that the Sanhedrin exercised to a very large extent the right of legislating and of executing the law, to a larger extent indeed than on the average was the case among non-autonomous communities in the Roman empire. The state of the law in general this, that the communities recognized by Rome as 'free' or 'autonomous' had expressly guaranteed to them the right of passing and executing their own laws, in fact, even over Roman citizens dwelling in their bounds...The Jewish worship was not only tolerated, but, as the enactment just referred to with regard to the temple shows, stood under State protection." 193, 194. Emil Schurer, *A History Of The Jewish People In The Time of Jesus*, ed., Nahum N. Glatzer (Schocken Books: New York, 1971), 193, 194.

¹²⁸ The crowds, or at the least, Jesus' intimate disciples and followers, presumably understood and appropriated more than both the Romans and the religious leaders. Concerning the crowds, one must always consider the fact that first-century Jews had numerous conceptions of what the 'kingdom of heaven' actually entailed (who its members were, how it was to be accomplished, what the result would be, etc.), let alone visions of the coming 'Messiah'. James D.G. Dunn in *Jesus Remembered*, list fourteen different conceptions which 'kingdom' terminology would have meant to Jews in Jesus' day. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 393-396. See also: Richard A. Horsely and John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, And Messiahs*, 90.

parables and temple cleansing that led to his quick demise, or in the perceptions of the authorities that this Jesus was creating a disturbance that must be stopped.¹²⁹ Whatever the case, Mark wastes no time in laying out the cards that followed this event. It seems,

¹²⁹ That Israel was both cognizant of kingship ideals and expectant should not be dismissed. Richard Horsley writes to this end. After surveying distinct episodes of kingship movements, he writes: “The common characteristics of these three movements led by popularly acclaimed ‘kings’ along with the highly similar features of Simon bar Giora during the great revolt and acclamation of Simeon bar Kokhba as ‘messiah’ in the second revolt have led to the recognition of a distinctively Israelite social form of kingship rooted in ancient Israelite traditions. Israelite history and historical memory provided a vivid tradition of popular kingship, exemplified by Saul, David, Jeroboam, and Jehu, among others. In each of these manifestations this tradition of popular kingship is revolutionary, the popularly acclaimed ‘king’ heading a revolt against foreign domination and/or domestic oppression. This heritage of popular kingship is visible in the scriptural ‘great tradition’ of the Deuteronomistic history, but it was surely carried also in the oral ‘little tradition’ of Galilean and Judean villages and towns.” Richard A. Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People*, 267. For more detail, see: Richard A. Horsley and John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, And Messiahs*, 88-134. I would add here, that this is what makes the ‘kingship’ of Jesus so ‘revolutionary’ in another sense. Unlike many of the ‘kings’, messiahs and false prophets which Josephus narrates, Jesus does not seem to clearly espouse political revolution per popular expectations. His kingship was essentially different, both in form and feature. According to the Gospels, Jesus’ movement and message was carried along by docile followers (which according to the Gospels, dwindled in size so that toward his later ministry it is hard to imagine a following as large as what Josephus claims of other leaders- if he is approximate or conflating numbers, who had anywhere from 4,000 to 30,000 followers (Josephus *War* 2.261, *Acts*, 21.38). Jesus’ followers, moreover, apparently carried next to nothing with them, relying upon the support of several woman (some of them quite affluent and in Herod Antipas’ circle), and claimed no militaristic zeal or suggestive symbols or warfare (if the Gospels are reliable at these points), and they sat beneath a teaching that, though expecting the imminent kingdom of God, did not suppose it in a manner analogous to many other leaders, prophets, or messianic claimants who sought God’s direct, immediate and supernatural intervention. That Jesus rode in on a donkey is clearly an affirmation of kingship, but that it was borne along by Passover crowds singing Hallel Psalms, and carrying branches, vegetation and without a clear lack of weapons (presumably) surely substantiates the motivation behind the Roman’s decision to leave this episode undisturbed. Only later in the week, when the religious leaders implicate Jesus in treasonous charges, does Rome swiftly act. In this light, Jesus notes the irony of his arrest (which only serves to further substantiate the authenticity of Jesus’ reply in Gethsemane); that he carried no weapons and publicly spoke all things, even in their midst (Mk 14:43-52, Mt. 55-56, Lk 22:52-53, Jn18:36). At this point too, it should be noted that though messiah/king and prophet terminology is debated as to its social networks and terminological distinctions (see: Richard Horsley “Popular Prophetic Movements” *New Testament Backgrounds: A Sheffield Reader, The Biblical Seminar*, 43, Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter eds., [Sheffield Academic Press: England, 1997] 124-148), Jesus, according to the Gospels, did not deny those who saw him as a prophet, messiah, or even, in our study here, as a king. The question is only amplified according to contemporary sociological studies: distinctions among leaders in any case (whether popular messianic movements- led by king or messiah figure, or popular prophetic movements) these only serve to magnify the complexities with which both Herod Antipas and Pilate had to negotiate those incurring trouble in their reign, and those (particularly in Galilee), who were aligning themselves with the OT tradition (namely, prophets). According to the Gospels, The common presumption was that Jesus was a prophet in line with those of old (Jeremiah, Elijah, or even John the Baptist: prophets of judgment), and this strengthens the conviction here that such perceptions were enough to warrant the belief that Jesus was not a prophet of liberation (in this case, from foreign dominance), but one who pronounced judgment directly upon the people of Israel. If such is the case, it certainly helps to explain why Herod Antipas permitted Jesus’ ministry for an extended time, and only when the crowds suggested a king title for Jesus or his popularity reached a crescendo, he sought to withdraw and to sometimes remove himself from Antipas’ jurisdiction and move into that of Philip’s tetrarchy.

then, that the triumphal entry, far from finding itself as an odd and irrelevant vestige of tradition, instead serves to better correlate the last days of Jesus' ministry. Whether it served as a grand event in his own consciousness and ambitions which further provoked him to direct action, or whether it was seen as another and perhaps a penultimate event that must be challenged and debated by the authorities, this narrative does in fact serve to be both highly relevant and necessary to a plausible reconstruction of Jesus' eventual execution.¹³⁰ Dale A. Brueggemann writes:

¹³⁰ Of course, scholars debate the precise motivation for Christ's death, whether theological or political, but it seems most appropriate to retain no such sharp distinction in Judea at this time (especially for the religious leaders). James S. McLaren writes: "...the prefect became involved in a Jewish dispute. Prominent members of the Jewish community wished to dispose of Jesus, an aim they achieved by convincing Pilate that Jesus was dangerous. Jesus' accusers probably acted to preserve the status quo of Jewish life under the veil of Roman supervision out of both genuine conviction and self-interest, if such a distinction is warranted.", McLaren, *Power And Politics In Palestine*, 101. Space forbids a detailed study of the trial and charge of Jesus (whether, and in what cases Jews could administer capital punishment, and why Pilate was involved supported by the Feast, Jesus' admirers, his temple actions, etc) but there is something to be said for the accuracy of the Gospels. That is, Jesus' formal charge was that of treason (and here the triumphal entry served to aggrandize his kingly claim), but the underlying motivation was religious and socio-economic (his temple offense, his Messianic claims at his trial, his large following among the people and the subsequent fear of Roman intervention, etc.). It appears that the religious leaders perceptively acted under the guise of charging Jesus with treason, so that Pilate would be forced to act. Possibly too, so that the religious leaders would be exonerated, and in either case, in view of the Feast, that the sizeable crowd and Jesus' followers would be squelched in peace. For a helpful introduction that attests to the plausibility of the Gospels' record of Jesus' trial with Pilate, see: R. Larry Overstreet "Roman Law and the Trial of Christ" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 135, no. 540 (Oct-Dec, 1978): 323-332. Also: E. Mary Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, 169. A.N. Sherwin-White also writes: "In the hearing before Pilate the synoptic narrative fits the Roman framework remarkably well, considering that it was written with an entirely different purpose in mind... the charge is clearly indicated, not as a charge or particular undesirable actions on which Pilate is asked to adjudicate. Mark and Matthew merely hint at the nature of the charge by giving Pilate the question: 'Are you the king of the Jews?' That this means 'a leader of the resistance' is shown by a parallel from Josephus, who in his anti-resistance fashion speaks of the troubles after the death of Herod: 'as the several companies of the seditious lighted upon anyone to head them, he was created a king immediately, in order to do mischief to the public'. Luke is explicit: 'we found this fellow disturbing our people, telling them not to pay tribute to Caesar, and calling himself a king'. This fits very well the workings of *cognitio*. The accusers allege offences and the judge decides what to make of them. Since there was no defense, Pilate had no option but to convict. That was the essence of the system" A.N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society And Roman Law In The New Testament*, 24-25. Concerning the perennial debate over whether or not the Sanhedrin had the power of capital punishment (outside of strict temple offenses), Sherwin-White further argues specifically that the Gospels are in fact highly accurate and that the capital punishment was directly under the power of the governor (or in this case, Pilate the prefect), and only in highly specific or unusual cases would the Sanhedrim avail themselves of capital punishment. See pgs. 32-44.

“Jesus claimed the Davidic promise that the rejected stone will become the cornerstone. This incendiary conclusion to the parable of the ruthless tenants unambiguously interprets it as a reference to the rejection and vindication of the Messiah. As far as the Jewish leaders were concerned, mixing potent entrance imagery from Ps. 118 was inflammatory, especially with Jesus’ implied royal re-enactment.”¹³¹

N.T. Wrights’ Questions for the Historian

As this paper concludes, it is worth considering how the Triumphal Entry fares against the questions previously proposed by N.T. Wrights. Those questions are these especially: How does Jesus fit into the Judaism of his immediate context? What were Jesus’ ambitions? Why did Jesus die? What was it that brought the early church into existence, and, last, why did it the early church take the form that it did?¹³² At this stage, these questions merit brief answers, as many of these issues have been previously addressed. Suffice it to say, the Markan Triumphal fits quite nicely into the realm of plausibility, understanding Jesus in his first-century context. As rabbi, prophet, and Messianic claimant, he validated his work and nature through O.T. prophecies and enacted parables. He was unique and a highly important individual for the impoverished masses, but one who simultaneously perceived his calling to be ultimate in view of God’s plan for Israel. The Triumphal Entry speaks powerfully to this. So he came, as one who comes in fulfillment of prophecy and in claiming the throne of Israel. Likewise, Jesus’ ambitions cannot be assigned to the periphery nor to the antiquated. He was one who spoke of peace to the fearful and hope to those destitute and who earnestly anticipated God’s kingdom. His ambitions were none other than to realize God’s work among his

¹³¹ *Interpreting The Psalms: Issues and Approaches*, eds., David Firth and Philip S. Johnston (IVP Academic: Downer’s Grove, Ill., 2005), 276. Craig Evans offers a detailed argument for the authenticity of Psalm 118: 22-23 according to Jesus’ own words (“Stone builders rejected”): *The Book of Psalms: Composition & Reception*, eds., Peter W. Flint and Patrick D. Miller (Brill Academic Pub.: Boston, 2005), 557-560.

¹³² N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, pg. 80.

people and to do so through the one who was to be the 'rejected stone'. His was a mission of humble service and dejection, placed alongside the enraptured power of a joyous people who understood his kingly nature. This is but reflective of his Jerusalem entry. Further, the casual nexus toward his death must take into consideration his fulfillment of prophecy (staking out his kingly nature) to those who perceived his prophetic overtures. It is thus quite likely that Pilate directly interrogated Jesus as king-claimant (which issue he immediately tackles with Jesus in all four Gospels), not simply because of a spurious charge from a jealous leadership, but because Jesus in fact, directly presented himself as Israel's king in his triumphal entry. Further, it was his subsequent rejection upon entering Jerusalem and his subsequent perception of the inadequacy of the temple that provided the impetus for his death and provided him with the prophetic passages that spoke of both his kingship and rejection. This, in turn, answers the issue of the origination of the early church, and the motivations for its perceptions of Jesus as both king and suffering servant and ransom for sin. The authenticity of the Triumphal Entry only further serves to demonstrate the unique perceptions the early church took of Jesus and the reasons for their emphasis upon Jesus as the cornerstone, coming king, and ransom for the sins of mankind. All of these find their place in that Triumphal Entry on that fateful week in Jerusalem. The Markan Triumphal thus becomes a crucial passage for understudying Jesus, first-century Palestine and also the early church. Gross negligence or rash dismissal of this account subsequently produces a portrait of Jesus which cannot account for either historical criterion or critical questions which historians must inevitably face. So, the questions find their answers here. How does Jesus fit into the Judaism of his immediate context?: The Triumphal Entry finds him to be squarely situated in his

Judaistic environment, yet remarkably original in his usage of specific O.T. passages for validation. What were Jesus' ambitions? The Triumphal Entry portrays him as one who presented himself as the anointed one of Israel, God's chosen agent in the coming kingdom. Why did Jesus die? The Triumphal Entry narrates this as the first of the causal nexus toward his death, both in his kingship claim and in the rejection he faced upon entering Jerusalem. Why did it the early church take the form that it did? Then triumphal Entry answers the church with a resounding affirmation of Jesus as God's anointed, the stone rejected but become the cornerstone, the suffering servant whose rejection was a grand plan of God's redemptive purpose. This same church must then reflect its messiah in suffering, rejection and ultimately, its share in glory. In all these the historian's questions find eminent plausibility in the Markan Triumphal.

Jesus As Enters Our Own Modern Temples

Inevitably, one must come to terms with a coherent response to the controversial figure known as Jesus of Nazareth. Despite his veiled self-references, ingenious parables, kingdom controversies, and miraculous works, each person must contend with the picture that the Gospels seem assured to ultimately present: the King and Savior of the world, or as Mark's Gospel states, immediately preceding the triumphal entry: 'For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.' (Mark 10:45).¹³³ In the end, when a multitude of Gospel pericopes or sayings have been

¹³³ Paul Garnet argues that Jesus' statement: "The Son of Man came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" in Mk. 10:45 serves as a bridge between the N.T. concept of Christ's vicarious atonement and that of Judaism and specifically the Qumran. He writes: "What then of the ransom saying of Jesus? Against this background [OT and Qumran literature] it would mean that the blessing of the many is to be inevitably connected with his death, without the person or the thing being particularly in view. If Isaiah 53 is also being alluded to (in view of the term 'the many' and of the servant theme), we might say the *kopher* [atonement] here is not so much a ransom as an atoning sacrifice, and thus offered to God. The

deduced as possible, authentic or probable, an individual must still evaluate the veracity and not simply the authenticity of Jesus of Nazareth (not simply what is authentic about him, but once authenticity is established, whether or not his claims are in fact, true or false). That is, one must no longer rest in the fancy of form criticisms' subterfuge. One must rather, respond in faith or reject the central claims of Jesus: that he is the receptacle of God's gracious kingdom, that he freely extended fellowship and open commensurability with the outcasts and sinners, and that his ultimate rejection was both part of his own willing resolve and simultaneously God's decisive plan for the conversion of the universal human condition of sin and self-serving. To be sure, dismissal of Jesus comes at a great cost, as witnessed by all four Evangelists (losing one's own soul and consigned to having Jesus' own words as one's eternal judge). It seems though, that the farther the Third Quest goes in pursuing issues of authenticity, without recourse to previous arbitrary and unwarranted judgments, the more culpability and vulnerability will be generated for those who far too easily arbitrate that the Gospels are but creative tales of the early church. Even though Reimarus' spirit, as a river, might still meander deep into the labyrinths of modern scholarship, it seems that, in time, the river will exhaust its wandering course and seek the simplicity and honesty of direct journeys that seek their channel straight through the Gospels and right into the very person of Jesus of Nazareth.

idea of inevitability would cohere with the sayings about the necessity of his forthcoming death: 'The Son of Man must suffer' (Mark 8:31, 9:12; cf. 10:34, 38). This 'must' has usually been interpreted as referring to the necessity of Scripture being fulfilled, but perhaps the necessity is simply inherent in the *kopher* idea." Paul Garnett "Atonement: Qumran And The New Testament" *The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls, vol. 3, The Scrolls and Christian Origins*, ed., James H. Charlesworth (Baylor University Press: Waco, Texas, 2006), 363. Here, Garnett traces the OT usage of the word *kopher* (which means: putting away wrath) through the OT (sometimes denoting expiation and sometime propitiation) and the Qumran literature (finding propitiation as a relevant idea). Despite the differences between the various groups in first-century Palestine, one cannot retain the idea that for Jesus, atonement was a new concern. Here then, the conception of Jesus as an individual to through whom atonement was accomplished might appear innovative to many in his context (evidencing dissimilarity), but nonetheless, Israel's' concern to effect atonement was certainly of critical concern (and so here evidences significant contextual plausibility).

Two issues are increasingly highlighted in the present quest: one is a greater allowance for the integrity of the Evangelists. The other is the subsequent necessity to squarely confront Jesus of Nazareth as he appears therein and to respond. We are then closing in on C.S. Lewis' trilogy (Jesus as liar, lunatic or Lord), and it might now alas be more feasibly employed by numerous critical scholars who are confronted with the need make a decisive and existential decision regarding the one from Galilee.

Summary

There is no end to testing the synoptic material. Whatever tests are employed, however many passages 'pass' the tests, the result is always the same. We end with individual bits of information sorted into 'lists' - 'virtually certain', 'completely unlikely', and everything in between. We must then make sense of it... 'Making sense of' means 'developing a hypothesis about'. Hypotheses should reflect the material, but they may go beyond it. The question is whether or not they explain it."¹³⁴

We heartily agree with the above statement concerning the role of the triumphal entry for the modern critical scholar. However, what has been questioned in this paper is the biased dismissal of the triumphal entry, *prima facie*. That is, there should be an honest reappraisal of the important criteria as it relates to the triumphal entry. The account cannot be lightly discarded. In fact, evangelicals have always maintained that events like this, Jesus riding on a peaceful donkey and weeping over his lack of acceptance and knowledge of Jerusalem's destruction, have provided the church with *the* crucial understanding of both Jesus' person and mission: the lowly, humble king seeking to

¹³⁴ E.P. Sanders and Margaret Davies, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels*, 336.

reconcile the lost and simultaneously calling all to comprehend and submit to his claims.¹³⁵

Setting the Triumphal Entry upon firm historical footing, then, inevitably decries those who produce divergent portraits of Jesus. Simply because the Triumphal Entry supports the church's historic motif of Jesus as lowly servant and suffering king does not immediately dismiss its plausibility. It might well be the case that the separation between the Jesus of history and faith is simply a safeguard for many scholars who do not wish to find a Jesus who mirrors essentially what the early church has come to believe, nor come to grips with the all too authentic and scandalizing claims of Jesus. With setting the Triumphal Entry on firm 'historical' footing, one faces a powerful presentation of a Jesus that has hitherto been assumed to be only the invention and creative genius of the early church. One finds a central portrait of Jesus that must be reckoned with. Of course, various palm branches still wave, conferring upon Jesus titles noticeably absent of savior and king terminology, but this is only to the detriment of those who do so arbitrarily. Happily, the Third Quest is increasingly aligning itself with the view that substantial portraits of Jesus in the Gospel are not due simply to the creative genius of the church. The credit for the genius belongs elsewhere. It belongs to the Jesus before whom palm branches wave, and before whom scholars continually stumble.

¹³⁵ Adolf Schlatter concedes to the Markan portrait of Jesus that emerges, which ultimately forms the heart of a proper evaluation of Jesus: "The new act symbolized by his entry remained internally and qualitatively the same as his deeds in Galilee. He did not make a single move to seize power. He was hailed by king without, however, making claims to be king himself. For those who believed in him, he made it their obligation not to remain silent, thus confirming their witness. More than this he did not do. The manner by which he procured the donkey shows how he balanced his concept of kingship with his poverty... the selflessness that controlled his behavior also rendered it a mystery for the leaders of the nation. When the messianic acclamation was taken up merely by lads, they pressured him to suppress it (Matt. 21:16). His passive attitude appeared to justify them in this, since, after all, he was not doing anything regal. By answering them, to their surprise, with Psalm 8:3, Jesus expressed his agreement with what was happening, both the children's acclamation and the silence of the elders." Adolf Schlatter, *The History of the Christ: The Foundation for New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 322.

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