

Lost Tales Time Lines

We people today really want to know what happens. To understand a piece of news, we need a diary of events, reports describing exactly how things have taken place. This is what we expect. Then we make of it whatever we will, whatever we can ...

Oral tradition must be distinguished from creating tradition.

Jesus, in his teaching, both used traditional sayings and created his own.

It was not Jesus alone who did this. His friends continued to create sayings, stories, parables, etc. long after he was gone. Long here = decades, centuries. And many communities were at it more or less independently. Not only did they create sayings 'as if' Jesus himself had said them; they also created stories about Jesus himself, stories he would not have recognised and would not have told about himself. The kerygma (proclamation) at the beginning of 1 Corinthians 15 for example.

Our intent is to try and uncover the creation of what came to be thought of as tradition, to discern its emergence between the lines of the remnants preserved in the writings that have survived. We will look, in particular, at the very early Judaisation of the description, understanding and interpretation of the way of life and words of Jesus and his friends.

Discerning probabilities, possibilities and impossibilities in a reportage view implied in the Gospel stories.

We will look in detail at the story of Jesus' *Entry into Jerusalem*. The story reads as if it were an incident on *one day* in the life of Jesus. The usage of Jewish scripture to frame and structure the story implies many more days than just the one recording that incident.

Even if the incident occurred as told, the preparations leading up to it are not described, only implied. It was not just a question of finding a donkey, but why they wanted to find a donkey in the first place! The structure of the story reveals that Jesus and his friends were acquainted with two particular scriptures. In fact, so well-acquainted that they were able to make many connections concerning different and incompatible messianic scenarios, to choose one particular type of messiah from among these, and to record that Jesus regarded himself as such a messiah - and that his friends did too.

But the event as written may not be describing a day in Jesus' life. (As we shall see, the development of the story of Jesus Preaching in the Synagogue rather implies that Jesus never thought of himself as a Messiah, but rather as one who witnessed the coming of a Messianic age and proclaimed what he saw.)

But whether the incident happened or not, the written record itself implies a time line of many points over a period much longer than the story's one day, a period leading up to the event described and extending long after it. Moments in the story's development may be plotted along the time line like points plotted along a trajectory, found by sifting through probabilities, possibilities and impossibilities of what could have happened and in what sequence. The first point on the trajectory is the either the day the event happened, or the day of the story's writing. Thereafter, we can identify and explore moments that led up to that first point and moments that followed it.

The trajectory mapping that emerges is an expansion of the story into a reportage-like sequence of reimagined events that exposes the meaning of the story more clearly. If a scripture is quoted and inspires the action (whether it happened, or whether it frames and structures the action as if it had happened) then Jesus, or those using that scripture must have been familiar with it, understood it and concluded *beforehand* that it was appropriate. If Jesus was deliberately enacting a scripture, he must have planned such enactment *in advance*.

Although such a time-line expanded reportage may not immediately discernible in a simple reading of a story, a form of structural reportage will always underlay any written text.

Sometimes it is possible to unfold the trajectory associated with one story in the light of that associated with another. We found, for example, that an examination of the inclusion/exclusion debate in GT43 and Luke 4 helped unfold a more plausible trajectory for the Entry into Jerusalem story. 'Outsiders blessed with messianic age blessings and we not; we hate that! We love our scriptures and tradition; but look what those outsiders have shown it to mean: outsiders are insiders; we hate that!'

Trajectory time and space origins

In what follows, all trajectories are linked to the time / space origin of Jesus' death by crucifixion. This is time-zero, the day to which every other event will be related, arbitrarily set to Friday 5-Apr-0030, taking place at point-zero(0,0), Golgotha, the

place just outside the city walls of Jerusalem where Jesus died. This origin is analogous to the time and place of a rocket launch. Events at different times and in different places led up to the launch and others took place after the launch. Jesus' death was just such a historical moment: recordable, videoable, visible. Time-zero at point-zero could have been seen, captured and described by a reporter on the spot at the time, were that person there with appropriate equipment.

As with a mechanical drawing, the origin is not absolute. We could take a different point. The exact moment is not too important in the case of Jesus' death. But if someone should think it important, it could in principle be adjusted to be more accurate. Having it absolutely accurate to the day or the year even is not as important as the relative accuracy of events preceding and following it. We may deduce that an event must have happened within days of Jesus' death but still be unsure of the exact year of both the event and that death.

What we will seek are *reportabilia*: things which, like that death, are likely to have happened. Such reportabilia form the basis of our understanding of what is happening in our world today. Our inquisitiveness about the past requires similar reportabilia to be discovered, recovered, imagined from the shards of history so that we may be able to weave the story of the past into something that not simply might have happened, but probably did.

Our aim is to outline a diary of events implied by texts. This diary is a time line of events, the sequence or stages from Jesus' first successes in enlightenment, healing, raising, to the time long after his death when the stories in the Gospels were written down. Stages in that sequence go something like this:

- Jesus life before enlightenment
- His moment of enlightenment
- The moment after which he was able to stimulate enlightenment in others.
- The liaison of Jesus and some of his friends with his brother James in Jerusalem. The first encounter of Jewish literacy and irreligious enlightenment.
- The temple incident
- Jesus' execution
- The Galilee groups, independent of James, loosely interconnected, keeping the words, illiterate, not particularly Jewish, vibrantly human
- James' group and the trauma of Jesus' death. Amos 8, a very early reflection.

- James' group's first reflection on the encounter: Jesus, Isaiah 61, the synagogue. The unexpected embodiment of the messianic age. The special character of that age: it was for all, especially the dispossessed, poor, ...
- James' group's second reflection on the encounter: The Entry into Jerusalem. The conjunction of most universal, least exclusive message of Judaism and the praxis and word-living of groups of open-hearted nobodies. Mutual enlightenment: praxis illuminating written words, and written words illuminating praxis: a language given for what was being done. (Note that Jesus and his people were not text based. James and his group were.)

After Jesus' death, there was a gradual move from *messianic age* to *Jesus as messiah*. This was part brought about by meditations informed by particular Jewish scriptures. The direction these thoughts took can be discerned by comparing eg the poems in the minor Pauline epistles with the servant songs in Isaiah. Examination of the Isaiah texts reveals the points from which subsequent Christological directions began. But this raises questions: Why were such directions taken? Were other directions possible? Why was there a shift from 'messianic age embodied in communities' to 'messiah embodied in Jesus'? Is there implied in this shift a waning of embodied messianic age, a looking back to Jesus, a looking outside for one who will do the rescuing? Or is it only the writers doing this? Are the writers, parasitic on the common experience of illiterates still embodying messianic age, simply describing how they see the roots and origins of that effective embodiment?

Later assumptions that the stories describe what happened literally (and trivially) demonstrate the waning of practice, the enfeeblement of language: to begin talking about love, a moment of love, is a distancing from that moment. The shared wonder of discovery and mutual recognition embodied in the stories' telling is missed by later generations if they view them as simple chronicling. To those who wrote them, simple chronicling would have been irrelevant. This shift is seen in the degeneration of the story in Luke 4 about Jesus and Isaiah 61 into Jesus being recorded as saying, 'A prophet is rejected in his home town'.

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