

DIGGING DEEPER *into* SCRIPTURE

Reading the Gospels

Steve Walton

Slides: <http://stevewalton.info>

Where we're going

6 May	OT prophecy and prophets
13 May	OT narrative
20 May	Gospels
27 May	Letters
3 June	Revelation [apocalyptic]
10 June	Psalms

What kind of books are the Gospels?

- ‘gospel’ εὐαγγέλιον *euangelion* — a message
- in secular use for good news of victory in battle
- Paul’s use
 - ‘For I am not ashamed of **the gospel**; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.’ Romans 1:16
 - ‘Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of **the good news that I proclaimed to you**, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to **the message that I proclaimed to you**—unless you have come to believe in vain.’
I Corinthians 15:1-2

The apostolic preaching in Acts

Acts 10:34-43

John the baptiser, Scripture fulfilled

vv 37, 43

Jesus' ministry

vv 38-39a

passion narrative

v 39b

Jesus' resurrection

vv 40-41

command to make disciples

v 42

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Acts 10:34-43

Mark

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vv 37, 43

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v 42

16:7

The Gospels as ancient biographies

- 'lives' βίαι *bioi*
- characteristics of ancient biographies
 - opening features
 - title
 - opening formulae

The Gospels as ancient biographies

- 'lives' βίαι *bioi*
- characteristics of ancient biographies
 - opening features
 - subject
 - is subject of a large proportion of verbs
 - given the lion's share of space

The Gospels as ancient biographies

- 'lives' βίαι *bioi*
- characteristics of ancient biographies
 - opening features
 - subject
 - external features
 - style, structure, etc.

The Gospels as ancient biographies

- 'lives' βίοι *bioi*
- characteristics of ancient biographies
 - opening features
 - subject
 - external features
 - internal features
 - setting
 - topics/content
 - values and attitudes espoused and promoted

The Gospels as ancient biographies

- 'lives' βίοι *bioi*
- characteristics of ancient biographies
 - opening features
 - subject
 - external features
 - internal features
 - the author's intention and purpose
- the Gospels are books about Jesus
 - but not like modern biographies
 - focus on what they say about Jesus

<https://bibleproject.com/videos/how-to-read-gospel/>

Why were the Gospels written?

- evangelistic reason
 - ‘But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.’
John 20:31

Why were the Gospels written?

- evangelistic reason
- didactic (teaching) reason
 - ‘I Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, 2 just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, 3 I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed.’ Luke 1:1-4

Why were the Gospels written?

- evangelistic reason
- didactic (teaching) reason
- geographical reason
 - need for eyewitness testimony as the gospel message spread

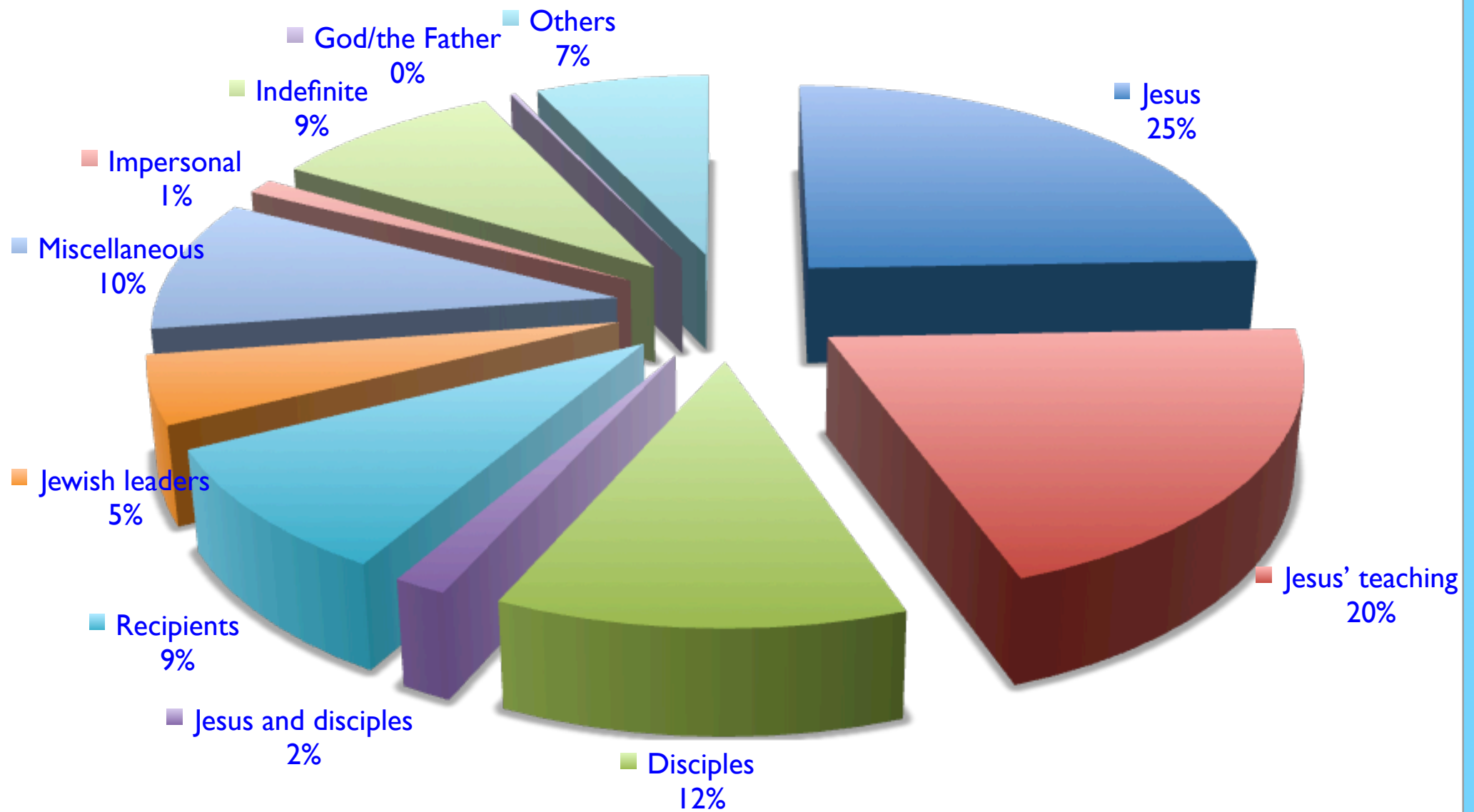
Why were the Gospels written?

- evangelistic reason
- didactic (teaching) reason
- geographical reason
- historical reason
 - the eyewitnesses were dying off in the later first century
 - ‘...they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word’ Luke 1:2

Reading Mark: It's all about Jesus

- opening features
 - 1:1 announces the subject
 - 1:2-3 fulfilment of Scripture
- Jesus dominates the action and speaking

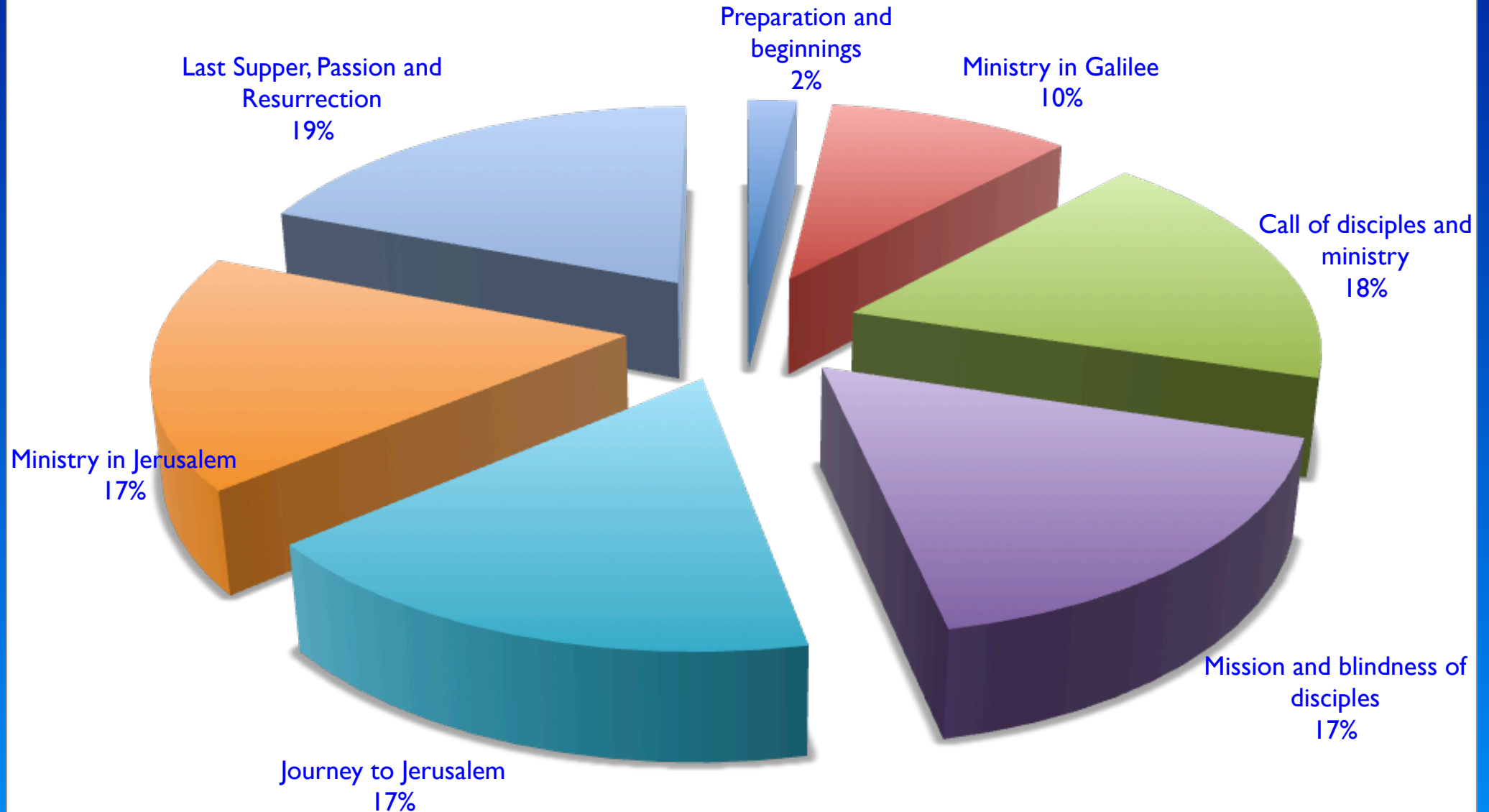
Verb subjects in Mark (Burridge's analysis)



Structure of Mark (Burridge)

<i>Chapters</i>	<i>Verses</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>%age of work</i>
1:1-13	13	Preparation and beginnings	2.0
1:14-3:6	66	Ministry in Galilee	9.9
3:7-6:6	119	Call of disciples and ministry	17.9
6:7-8:26	113	Mission and blindness of disciples	17.0
8:27-10:52	113	Journey to Jerusalem	17.0
11-13	114	Ministry in Jerusalem	17.1
14-16:8	127	Last Supper, Passion and Resurrection	19.1
<i>Totals</i>	<i>665</i>		<i>100.0</i>

Content analysis of Mark's Gospel (Burridge)



Reading Mark: It's all about Jesus

- roughly chronological
- geographical progression from Galilee to Jerusalem
- topic material grouped
- scale: focus on Jesus

‘The circle of light is always sharply defined. The description of those who appear in it is limited to the essential.’ (Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1960, 25)

Jesus' identity
and mission are
revealed
8:27–9:10

Who is Jesus?
1:1–8:26

Why has Jesus
come?
9:11–16:8



Reading Mark: It's all about Jesus

- literary units
- characterisation
 - by words and deeds in ancient writings
 - Jesus' portrait through words and deed
 - other characters portrayed *in relation to Jesus*

Reading Mark: It's all about Jesus

- internal features

- settings focused around Jesus

‘Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves’ 11:15

Reading Mark: It's all about Jesus

- internal features
 - settings focused around Jesus
 - topics and contents included
 - ‘As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and **he had compassion for them**, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.’ 6:34

Reading Mark: It's all about Jesus

- internal features
 - settings focused around Jesus
 - topics and contents included
 - ‘**Moved with pity**, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, “I do choose. Be made clean!”’ 1:41

Reading Mark: It's all about Jesus

- internal features
 - settings focused around Jesus
 - topics and contents included
 - ‘Jesus said to them, “Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” **And they were utterly amazed at him.**’ 12:17

Reading Mark: It's all about Jesus

- internal features
 - settings focused around Jesus
 - topics and contents included
 - author's intention and purpose

Reading Mark: It's all about Jesus

- not the early church
- not the Christian life
- when we read Mark, we should look for **Jesus as Mark portrays him**
 - and how to respond to Jesus

Mark 8:22–10:52

- Jesus journeys to Jerusalem
- What are the **major units/sections** of this journey/
- What **parallels/repetitions** do you notice in Jesus' actions and teaching?
- What is Mark telling us about **Jesus**?
- What is Mark telling us about **what it means to follow Jesus**?

RICHARD A. BURRIDGE



**Four Gospels,
One Jesus?**

A symbolic reading

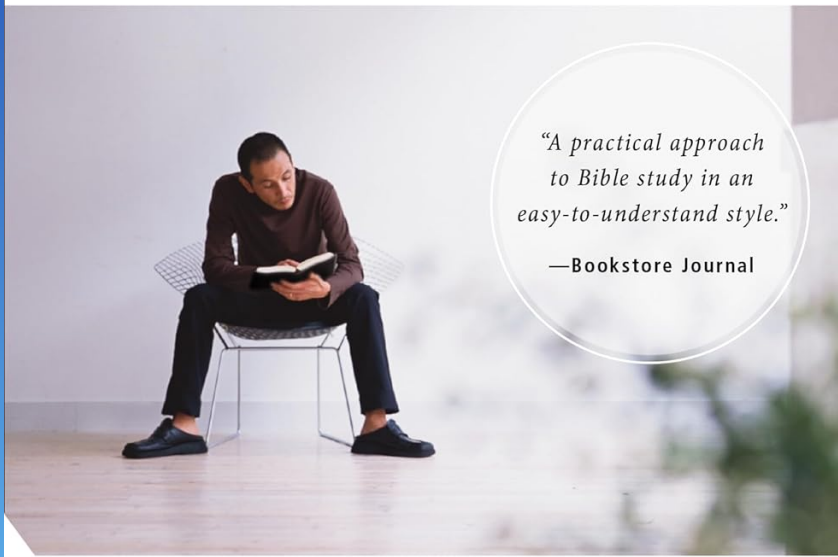
CLASSICS SPCK CLASSICS SPCK CLASSICS

Richard Burridge,
*Four Gospels, One
Jesus?*
SPCK, 1994
(reprinted 2005,
2014)

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Zondervan, 2014

Chapter 7 'The Gospels' and
Chapter 8 'The Parables'

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Next time:

Reading the NT Letters