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978-1-107-41844-8 - The Fourfold Gospel: Section III: The Proclamation of the New Kingdom

Edwin A. Abbott

Excerpt

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CHAPTER I*

THE CALLING OF THE FISHERMEN¹

[Mark i. 16—20]

§ I. *The Calling, in Mark-Matthew*

THE Mark-Matthew account of the Calling of Peter and his companions would not need to be studied with all the detail that will be found in this Chapter if it were not necessary to compare it with what may be called the Lucan Reminding of Peter². The Lucan narrative includes an account of a miraculous draught of fishes. John also describes a miraculous draught of fishes, and connects it with what may be called the Restoration of Peter³. But John places it after the Resurrection.

This raises the question how far some of the Evangelists may have been elsewhere chronologically misled so as to place during Christ's life on earth words and acts that should have been placed after the Resurrection while He was still present with His disciples at frequent intervals. It has been

* For titles of previous Parts of Diatessarica referred to by abbreviations in this Volume, see pp. 545—6. For other abbreviations see pp. xxiii—xxvi.

¹ See Mk i. 16—20, Mt. iv. 18—22, Lk. v. 1—2, 9—11, which will be found arranged in parallel columns on pp. 5—6.

² Lk. v. 3 foll. See p. 4, as to the reasons for so calling it.

³ Jn xxi. 7—19, see pp. 35 foll., 91 foll. In this narrative Peter comes to Jesus through the water and receives the charge "Feed my sheep," together with a prediction that he shall die by crucifixion.

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pointed out in the introductory volume of *The Fourfold Gospel* that “perhaps the Sending of the Seventy—or some of its precepts, such as ‘eat those things that are set before you’—may refer to a period after the Resurrection¹.” Matthew masses most of these precepts with the precepts to the Twelve. Neither Mark nor Matthew makes mention of any mission of the Seventy. It seems probable that Luke is correct in making the precepts later than those to the Twelve, but incorrect in not making them a great deal later. John leaves no room for us in his Gospel to place appropriately any important and fruitful mission of Apostles, whether twelve or seventy. If he is right in his views, we ought (it would seem) to recognise that some things recorded by the Synoptists may have been recorded out of order, placed too early, and in a setting that makes us unable to understand their spiritual meaning. Such a recognition ought to make us patient to the utmost in investigating the following instance of Lucan divergence from Mark and Matthew, and the apparent Johannine intervention.

In Mark, closely followed by Matthew, the first separate act of Jesus, after He has begun to preach the Gospel, is to call two pairs of brothers—both pairs fishermen. To the first pair, Simon and his brother Andrew, whom Mark describes as “casting-about in the sea²,” Jesus says, “Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Thereupon “they followed him.” “Going on a little [further],” says Mark, “he saw James the [son] of Zebedee and John his brother—them, too, in *the* boat, mending³ *the* nets.” Here “*the* boat” means, not the previously mentioned “boat” of Peter, but “*their* boat,” and

¹ See *Fourfold Gospel, Introduction*, p. 110, quoting 1 Cor. x. 27 “eat everything that is set before you [to eat],” *i.e.*, without regard to distinctions of the Mosaic Law. See *Clue 233* foll., *From Letter to Spirit 1015 a* foll.

² “Casting-about,” ἀμφιβάλλοντας, see p. 32.

³ “Mending,” καταρτίζοντας (possibly “adjusting”), see p. 34.

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“*the* nets” means “*their* nets.” Matthew says “in *the* boat with Zebedee *their* father mending *their* nets.” This implies, not only that “the boat” belonged to the Zebedaeian family (and presumably to Zebedee), but also that Zebedee was present. Mark also implies this in his next verse: “And straightway he called them, and leaving their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired-servants, they went after him.” Matthew has “And he called them. So they straightway, leaving the boat and their father, followed him”—omitting the clause about “the hired-servants.”

Zebedee is never mentioned again in such a way as to imply that he was still alive. There are passages where James and John are called his “sons.” And, in Matthew, Zebedee’s wife, or his widow, is called “the mother of the sons of Zebedee¹.” This favours the hypothesis that he was dead at the time of the Calling, and that the Mark-Matthew account of his presence is an error. If he was present, several unanswered questions arise. Was not Zebedee included in the Call (“he called *them*”)? If he was included, did he disobey, and did his wife leave him and go about with his sons following Jesus? Or did his death happen soon after the Calling and pass unmentioned by Mark and Matthew?

Another question, in connection with the Mark-Matthew narrative, is whether the two pairs of fishermen are to be regarded as called on terms of equality. To the first pair a promise is made, “I will make you fishers of men.” No such words are uttered to the second pair. Both pairs follow Jesus; but the second pair receives no recorded promise.

To the question “Why did the fishermen follow?” Mark and Matthew give no answer, except what we may infer from their preceding statement that Jesus had begun to preach repentance in public². We have to suppose either—what is

¹ Mt. xx. 20, xxvii. 56.

² Mk i. 15, Mt. iv. 17 “repent ye.”

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very improbable—that Jesus here repeated the substance of His preaching, first to one pair, and then to the other, or else that the four fishermen had already heard His preaching, or the report of it, and already knew so much about Jesus that His mere call sufficed to make them follow.

§ 2. *The Reminding, in Luke*

In Luke, there is a somewhat similar narrative about two fishing-boats, one belonging to Simon, and the other to Simon's "sharers [in the work]" or "partners," the sons of Zebedee. Andrew is not mentioned. Nor is Zebedee mentioned, except to say that the owners of the second boat are his sons. Toward the end there is addressed, but only to Simon, an exhortation, "Fear not," followed by a promise, "From henceforth thou shalt take men alive." Finally it is said "And having brought the boats to land, having left all things, they followed him." It will be observed that there is no "calling" here. All "follow" but none are "called."

The reason will be obvious when we compare the three Synoptic narratives, supplementing what is printed below (pp. 5—6) by inserting the Lucan story of a miraculous draught of fishes¹, and also noting that Luke places his narrative *after*, while Mark and Matthew place it *before*, Christ's visit to Peter's house, where He healed Peter's mother-in-law. Mark-Matthew will then be seen to be not really parallel to Luke. Mark-Matthew describes "a calling." Luke appears to have assumed and omitted the Calling², and to describe what might be termed "a reminding," which he placed after the Marcan "calling³." If that is the case, then, according to Luke, after

¹ Lk. v. 3—10.

² Somewhat similarly Luke and John make only a brief and incidental mention of the Baptist's imprisonment, and no mention at all of his death. But it must be confessed that the Lucan omission of the Calling is less easily explicable.

³ A friend suggests that Luke may have thought of his narrative

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Peter and Andrew had heard the words "I will make you fishers of men," Peter returned to his occupation of fishing. Jesus, finding him thus occupied, works a miracle that brings him to his knees—apparently alarmed, not by the wonder alone, but also by his own conscience, and by the remembrance of his neglected duty to the wonder-worker. Then the Lucan words "fear not," and "from henceforth," imply that the neglect is forgiven but must now come to an end¹. The "catching," or "taking-alive," of "men" is to begin at once:—"From henceforth thou shalt be taking-alive [not fish, but] men."

 § 3. *The Calling and the Reminding, compared*

It might be supposed that we could learn nothing from comparing the Calling with the Reminding, since they do not profess to describe the same events. And indeed a comparison would be misleading if we assumed in them a parallelism of fact. But even a glance at the following columns will probably shew the reader that there is something to be learned from their contrasts or omissions as well as from their similarities or identities:—

	Lk. v. 1—2, 9—11	
Mk i. 16—20 (R.V.) ²	Mt. iv. 18—22 (R.V.) ²	(R.V.) ²
(16) And passing along by the sea of	(18) And walking by the sea of Galilee,	(1) Now it came to pass, while the

as describing a first Calling whereas Mark describes a second. Thus the "rending" of the nets in Luke (v. 6) would precede the "mending" in Mark. But ancient authorities (*e.g.* the *Diatessaron*) do not support this view. And internal evidence appears to be against it.

¹ This is the most obvious explanation of Peter's alarm. But it is not satisfactory. A large draught of fishes, even a stupendous one, is not the kind of phenomenon that is represented in O.T. (*e.g.* 1 K. xvii. 18) as causing similar alarm (or what Alford calls (on Lk. v. 8) "self-loathing").

² Printed here as in the Revised Version. Later on, separate phrases will occasionally be rendered differently, for example, Mk i. 16 "Simon and Andrew...casting-about [a net] in the sea."

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Mk i. 16—20 (R.V.)
(*contd.*)

Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net in the sea: for they were fishers.

(17) And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.

(18) And straightway they left the nets, and followed him.

(19) And going on a little further, he saw James the [son] of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending the nets.

(20) And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after him.

Mt. iv. 18—22 (R.V.)
(*contd.*)

he saw two brethren, Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers.

(19) And he saith unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men.

(20) And they straightway left the nets, and followed him.

(21) And going on from thence he saw other two brethren, James the [son] of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.

(22) And they straightway left the boat and their father, and followed him.

Lk. v. 1—2, 9—11
(R.V.) (*contd.*)

multitude pressed upon him and heard the word of God, that he was standing by the lake of Genesaret;

(2) And he saw two boats standing by the lake: but the fishermen had gone out of them, and were washing their nets.

(3) And he entered into one of the boats, which was Simon's.....

(9) For he was amazed, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken;

(10) And so were also James and John, sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch (*lit.* take alive) men.

(11) And when they had brought their boats to land, they left all, and followed him.

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The first question that arises out of these different narratives is “Why does Luke speak of ‘the lake of Gennesaret’ whereas Mark and Matthew have ‘the sea of Galilee’?” A brief answer may be given in the words of an ancient opponent of Christianity, “Those who report the truth of the localities say that there is no sea there, but only a small lake¹.” In LXX, the Greek for “lake” is very rare, and always means “pool².” The Hebrew Scripture and the Talmud have but one word for “lakes” and “seas,” and the Talmud speaks of “*the sea of Gennesar*,” though more often of “*the sea of Tiberiah*” (but not (apparently) “the sea of Galilee”). The prophecy of Isaiah quoted at this stage by Matthew (“toward the *sea*, Galilee of the Gentiles”) might naturally induce the authors of the earliest Gospels to call it “*sea of Galilee*.” But Strabo and Josephus speak of “*the lake of Gennesar*” or “the Gennesarite *lake*,” and this term would naturally commend itself to Luke, who aims at writing like a Greek historian. He never mentions “the sea of Galilee,” but only “the lake of Gennesaret.”

As regards the name Tiberias, we find Josephus now and then speaking of “the lake of the men of Tiberias” or “the lake near Tiberias.” This, as a name of the lake, is also mentioned by Pliny. Tiberias was not founded till A.D. 20—30, and therefore could hardly have given its name to the lake of Gennesar at the time when the Gospel narrative began to be circulated. But after the destruction of Jerusalem it became the principal seat of the learning of the Law. Then Palestinian as well as Roman and Greek influences would favour the introduction of the new name of the lake. John accepts the new name, and (as it were) bridges over the interval between the old name and the new in his first mention of the lake, thus: “Jesus went away to the other side of *the sea of Galilee*, which is [*the sea*] of Tiberias³.”

¹ Macarius iii. 6 (p. 60).

² Ps. cvii. 35, cxiv. 8, Cant. vii. 4, comp. 1 Macc. xi. 35 “salt pools,” 2 Macc. xii. 16.

³ Jn vi. 1.

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These three different ways of describing the scene of some of the most remarkable events in the Gospel are not, in themselves, important. But indirectly the study of the differences throws light on the motives and circumstances of the Evangelists, and on the date of the traditions recorded by them. The study of other differences will be found similarly illuminating. Why, for example, does Luke make no mention of Andrew here? Was Andrew absent from the Reminding though present at the Calling? Or was it merely for brevity? Neither explanation will seem quite satisfactory when we come, a little later on, to Mark's statement that Jesus "came into the house of Simon and Andrew," and find Luke (in this case followed by Matthew) again omitting Andrew's name.

Again, as to Zebedee, was he, too, absent from the Reminding though present at the Calling? That will not suffice to explain why his boat is no longer called his but his sons'. No answer will be satisfactory that does not explain other passages where Mark inserts the name of Zebedee and Luke rejects it. In this and in other cases of narratives that describe similar but not identical events, such as Luke's and John's accounts of a miraculous draught of fishes, the best plan will be to compare them phrase by phrase, in order to ascertain whether one of the two traditions has modified the other.

 § 4. *Jesus "passing-by"*¹, in *Mark*

Instead of "*pass-by*," Matthew has "*walk [about]*," while Luke describes Jesus, first as "*standing*" by the lake, and afterwards as "*teaching*" in Peter's boat. Mark applies "*pass-by*" once more to Jesus thus:—

Mk ii. 13—14	Mt. ix. 9	Lk. v. 27
(13) And he went- forth ² again by the	And <i>passing-by</i> thence, Jesus saw a	And after these things he went-forth ²

¹ In this section, the N.T. Gk for "pass-by" is *παράγω*.

² "Went forth," *ἐξῆλθε*, might in certain contexts mean "disembarked," as perhaps in Mk vi. 34.

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Mk ii. 13—14 (*contd.*)

sea; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them.

(14) And *passing-by*, he saw Levi the [son] of Alphaeus, sitting at the place of toll...

Mt. ix. 9 (*contd.*)

man sitting at the place of toll, called Matthew...

Lk. v. 27 (*contd.*)

and beheld a receiver-of-toll, by name Levi, sitting at the place of toll...

In both the Marcan passages there is a mention of "sea." In the second there is a mention of "place of toll." Now the Greek "*pass-by*" is used by Polybius to mean "come into port," and by Epictetus (apparently) for "touch at a port"; and nouns derived from this verb mean "coming to land," and "dues" payable by a vessel on putting to land or touching at a harbour¹. Possibly some assumption that Jesus "came by the sea" may explain how the word came to be used by Mark here instead of the ordinary words for "going-by"². The thought of Jesus, at this crisis, as "coming by the sea" in some way or other, either "*by the side of the sea*," or "*on the sea*," would be suggested by the prophecy of Isaiah, quoted in the parallel Matthew concerning the "great light" manifested "*by the way of the sea*" in connection with "Galilee of the Gentiles"³.

But another and quite different allusion to "*passing-by*" might spring from the thought of a parallelism between the calling of the Fishermen by Jesus and the calling of Elisha by Elijah, who is said to have "passed over unto him" or "passed by him." Not that Elijah actually *said* to Elisha "Come after me." Yet that Elisha understood him to *mean*

¹ See Steph. *Thes.* vi. 235—7.

² These would be *παρέρχομαι, παραπορεύομαι*, etc.

³ Is. ix. 1—2.

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it, is certain, though the context is obscure¹. For Elisha says “*I will* (lit.) *go after thee*,” and it is added that Elisha “*went after*” Elijah and “*ministered unto him*.” In Mark, the Baptist is regarded as “*Elijah*,” and as using about Jesus the words “*there cometh*” and “*after me*².” It is therefore antecedently probable that in this narrative, when Mark is about to describe Jesus as saying “[*Come*] *hither after me*,” and to describe how the fishermen “*went after him*,” he would have in mind the occasion when Elijah virtually said “*Come after me*” and Elisha actually said “*I will* (lit.) *go after thee*.” On that occasion the Hebrew Scripture described Elijah as “*passing-over*” to Elisha, or “*passing-by*,” and Mark might use “*pass-by*” here allusively.

It will be found that this Marcan word for “*pass-by*,” when used of persons absolutely and without qualification³, is used nowhere in the canonical LXX except in a passage of the Psalms where the Midrash exhibits differences of opinion: “*Neither do they that pass by say, The blessing of the Lord be upon you*⁴.” One Rabbi takes it literally. Another refers it to the Gentiles, who “*pass-by*” like a vapour. Jerome takes it to mean the saints who “*have passed away to heaven and to eternity*.” These variations and other ambiguities of the word both in Hebrew and in Greek may help to explain why Luke never applies this word to Jesus. But they also raise the question, “*Does John apply this word to Jesus, and if so, to what effect?*”

¹ 1 K. xix. 19—20, R.V., “*And Elijah passed over unto him* (A.V. *passed by him*) and cast his mantle upon him.” Gesen. 718 *a* gives only this instance of “*pass-over*” with “*unto*” (foll. by person), LXX ἐπὶ ἄλλου (A ἀπὸ ἄλλου) ἐπ’ αὐτόν.

1 K. xix. 20 (lit.) “*Go, return*” is interpreted, by some, “*Go [home to bid farewell, and then] return [to me]*.” See Breithaupt’s Rashi *ad loc.* Contrast Mt. viii. 21—2, Lk. ix. 59—60.

² Mk i. 7.

³ This excludes such an instance as 2 S. xv. 18 ἀνὰ χεῖρα αὐτοῦ παρηγγον, R.V. “*passed on beside him*.”

⁴ Ps. cxxix. 8.