

PARABOLIC OVERTURES

1. Where do you experience overtures?
 - a. What comprises an overture?
 - b. What is the purpose of an overture?
2. How would you describe a parable?
3. What is a parable's purpose?
4. Think about a parable that you've read in the gospels
 - a. What are the "events" of the story?
 - b. What is the story saying to its audience?
 - c. Does the story lose meaning if the events are not literal history?
5. Which has greater meaning: historical fact or parable?

MATTHEW AND LUKE'S BIRTH NARRATIVES

1. Recall from memory the elements of Jesus' birth narratives
2. List each according to their authors
3. Discuss the differences between the two narratives
4. Consider what may be the themes for each Gospel



NEXT WEEK: MATTHEW'S PARABLE

Homework:

Read Matthew 1-2

Discover the number of times the following are mentioned, and earn a star for the day!

___ Women in the genealogy

___ Messiah

___ Dreams

___ Bethlehem

___ Old Testament passages

Read also: Exodus 1 – 2:10

A CHRISTMAS CAROL



OVERTURES FROM THE (HOLY) GHOSTS OF CHRISTMAS PAST, PRESENT, & FUTURE

SESSION ONE "THE COSMIC CLASH"

MATTHEW AND LUKE'S CIRCUMSTANCES:

1. Their Gospels were written sometime in the 80s and 90s CE .
 - a. Paul's letters were written 3 to 4 decades prior.
 - b. Mark Gospel was written around 70 CE.
 - c. Writers of Matthew and Luke were not alive during Jesus lifetime.
 - d. Neither Paul nor Mark make any mention of Jesus birth, nor does John's gospel, but all claim Jesus as the son of God, both human and divine.
2. The Roman Empire is now on its 11th Emperor.
 - a. Christianity has flourished through Emperors Caligula, Claudius, and Nero.
 - b. Intense persecution of Christians begins with Nero 54–68 CE.
 - c. After Nero, Rome goes through three emperors in one year, ending with Vespasian, who rules 69-79 CE.
 - d. During Vespasian's rule, Jerusalem is destroyed by his son and general: Titus.
 - e. After a two-year reign of Titus, his brother Domitian murders him and takes over the throne ruling from 81CE to 96CE, most likely when these two gospels are written.
 - f. Domitian's government exhibits strong authoritarian characteristics. Religious, military, and cultural propaganda fosters a cult of personality, and by nominating himself as perpetual censor, he seeks to control public and private morals.
 - g. Emperor Domitian is characterized as a ruthless but efficient autocrat.

