**A Personal Introduction to the Bible – Joe Moffatt**

3rd Talk – Understanding the New Testament – October 15th 2019

**One Solitary Life**

*He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant. He grew up in another village, where he worked in a carpenter shop until he was 30. Then, for three years, he was an itinerant preacher.

He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family or owned a home. He didn't go to college. He never lived in a big city. He never travelled 200 miles from the place where he was born. He did none of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but himself.

He was only 33 when the tide of public opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. One of them denied him. He was turned over to his enemies and went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. While he was dying, his executioners gambled for his garments, the only property he had on earth. When he was dead, he was laid in a borrowed grave, through the pity of a friend.

Twenty centuries have come and gone, and today he is the central figure of the human race. I am well within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned - put together - have not affected the life of man on this earth as much as that one, solitary life.*

*James Allen Francis.*

**The New testament draws us into this remarkable story. Intended to draw you into a relationship with Christ and his Church. Inherently evangelical, aiming to reach out, written always with readers in mind.**

**Types of Writing**

**Gospels:** Matthew/Mark/Luke/John - biography – not in modern sense of upbringing/personality – but like ancient ‘lives’, outlining deeds and words, detailing death as final revelation of character.

**Letters**: addressed to specific communities/individuals – 13 attributed to Paul, others to James/Peter/John/Jude - often one-side of an argument – didactic, corrective and pastoral

**Acts of the Apostles**: sequel to Gospel of Luke

**Revelation:** circular letter and apocalyptic prophecy – visions for resistance

**Dating**

**1st phase: late 40’s – early 60’s**

Genuine letters of Paul [1&2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans, Philippians, Philemon, Colossians?]

**2nd phase: 60’s – 90’s**

Gospels – Mark in 60’s, Matthew/Luke after 70, John in 90’s?

**3rd phase: 90’s – early 2nd century**

Most of the other letters, Acts, Revelation

Dating the books of the NT: ‘like a line of drunks, propping each other up, with no fixed wall to lean on’.

**Four Portraits, One Jesus**

**Beginnings**

Mark – cuts straight to Baptism of Christ

Matthew – long genealogy, Joseph, Wise Men, Herod, Flight to Egypt

Luke – Zechariah, Elizabeth, Mary, Shepherds, Temple

John – Prologue, John the Baptist, First Disciples

**Crucifixion**

Mark 15:21-41 – two bandits, totally abandoned, mocked, forsaken

Matthew 27: 32-56 – ditto

Luke 23: 26-49 – penitent thief, forgiving and inclusive to the end

John 19:17-30 – Mary and beloved disciple – in control, all is accomplished

**Further reading**

* The Lion Handbook to the Bible (5th edition 2017 - brilliant for background)
* The Bible: The Biography – Karen Armstrong (2015)
* A History of the Bible: The Book and Its Faiths – John Barton (2019)
* Four Gospels, One Jesus?: A Symbolic Reading – Richard Burridge (2013)
* Paul: a Biography – NT Wright (2018)
* SPCK New Testament for Everyone series by NT (Tom) Wright