

**WHO WERE THE  
EVANGELISERS? SOME  
IMPLICATIONS OF  
BAUCKHAM'S EYEWITNESS  
THEORY FOR EARLY  
EVANGELISM**

MARK J. KEOWN



Some time ago I had the pleasure of hearing Richard Bauckham speak in Auckland. As I heard him discussing aspects of his perspective on eyewitness tradition, I realised that his ideas might have potentially important implications for our understanding of the initial spread of the Christian faith. His arguments, arguably, give further impetus to the idea that the gospel spread not merely through significant individuals such as Peter and Paul, supported by local churches in prayer and finance, but through a wide range of Christians who shared their personal experiences of salvation in Jesus – a perspective I have defended in my work on Paul and evangelisation in his letters and in Acts.<sup>1</sup> I will suggest that Bauckham’s work helps us see that there may be many more evangelisers we can identify in the NT than previously acknowledged. Further, the scope and nature of their evangelisation confirms an approach to sharing the faith that included personal testimony and experience.<sup>2</sup> I have chosen “evangeliser” to differentiate with an evangelist, which is an office or charismatic function (e.g. Eph 4:11) and customarily interpreted as someone preaching the gospel to unbelievers. In contrast, an evangeliser is anyone who shares the good news or aspects of it whether to Christians or others. This can be within a church community or beyond.

### BAUCKHAM’S HYPOTHESIS

Richard Bauckham, in his book *Jesus and the Eye Witnesses*, considers a phenomenon that, at the time of writing, was something that is unsatisfactorily explained; namely, that “[m]any characters in the Gospels are unnamed, but others are named.”<sup>3</sup> More specifically, aside from those named for obvious purposes such as OT characters, Luke’s devotee Theophilus, disciples and historical figures like

1 Mark J. Keown, *Congregational Evangelism in Philippians: The Centrality of an Appeal for Gospel Proclamation to the Fabric of Philippians* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008); idem, “Congregational Evangelism in Paul: The Paul of Acts,” *Colloquium* 42.2 (2010): 231–251.

2 A good example is E. J. Schnabel’s monumental work on Mission in the Gospels which, while incredibly comprehensive, pays absolutely no attention to these minor evangelizers, focussing on the Twelve and Seventy-two. See E. J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission. Volume 1. Jesus and the Twelve* (Leicester, Eng: Apollos, 2004). Similarly, Michael Green’s seminal work on *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004) lacks any interest in these figures.

3 Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eye Witnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 39.

John the Baptist and Herod, why is it that relatively insignificant individuals like Cleopas, Jairus, Bartimaeus, Lazarus, Simon of Cyrene, Mary of Bethany and Malchus are named in the Gospels? Why is it that others are not named? Further, why in one Gospel is one or other of these people named, whereas in another Gospel he or she is not?

Bauckham postulates that those named in the Gospel traditions indicate that these are eyewitnesses to the events that are described. He adheres to a widely suggested premise that these named people “joined the early Christian movement and were well known at least in the circles in which these traditions were first transmitted.”<sup>4</sup> Building on the previous idea, he suggests, “[i]f the names are of persons well known in the Christian communities, then it also becomes likely that many of these people were themselves the eyewitnesses who first told and doubtless *continued to tell the stories in which they appear and to which their names are attached.*”<sup>5</sup>

While there have been critics of Bauckham’s work,<sup>6</sup> and noting that his suggestion does not apply to all named people due to their age at the time of the events (e.g. Anna and Simeon in Luke 2), overall

I find Bauckham’s argument persuasive. If so, then Bauckham’s suggestion has potentially significant implications for understanding evangelisation in the earliest phases of the Christian church.<sup>7</sup> First, it impacts the question of who, where and how people did evangelism. Secondly, it has significant ramifications for the content of the message preached by early Christians.

4 Bauckham, *Jesus*, 45.

5 Bauckham, *Jesus*, 47 (italics mine).

6 See for example the criticisms in D. Catchpole, “On Proving too Much: Critical Hesitations about Richard Bauckham’s *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*,” *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus (JSHJ)* 6 (2008): 169–81; S. J. Patterson, “Can You Trust a Gospel? A Review of Richard Bauckham’s *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*,” *JSHJ* 6 (2008): 194–210; T. J. Weeden Sr., “Polemics as a Case for Dissent: A Response to Richard Bauckham’s *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*,” *JSHJ* 6 (2008): 211–24; J. Schröter, “The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony? A Critical Examination of Richard Bauckham’s *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*,” *JSNT* 31.2 (2008): 195–209; S. Byrskog, “The Eyewitnesses as Interpreters of the Past: Reflections on Richard Bauckham’s, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*,” *JSHJ* 6 (2009): 157–68; Judith C. S. Redman, “How Accurate are Eyewitnesses? Bauckham and the Eyewitnesses in the Light of Psychological Research,” *JBL* 129.1 (2010): 177–97.

7 For the purposes of this article, I am using “evangelisation” as the process of making disciples through the proclamation of the *euangelion* and “evangelism” as the actual practice of verbal communication of the gospel message.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR WHO AND WHERE PEOPLE DID EVANGELISM

First, assuming the veracity of Bauckham's thesis,<sup>8</sup> with his hypothesis in mind, I will consider the question of *who* did evangelism and *where* these people were focused.

### CLEARLY IDENTIFIABLE EVANGELISERS

The Gospel accounts, Acts and the letters refer to central figures in evangelisation. In the Synoptic Gospels, these include Jesus himself and particularly, the named members of the Twelve as apostles who Jesus' appointed (Mark 3:16–19; Luke 6:12–16) and sent on missions by Jesus (Mark 6:7–12, 30; Matt 10:1–23; Luke 9:1–6, 10). The initial commission of the first disciples also emphasises evangelism as a primary task – fishing for people (Mark 1:17; Matt 4:19; Luke 5:10). There is also indication of the activity of the Twelve in the failed exorcism of the paralytic boy after the Transfiguration (Mark 9:14–29; Matt 17:14–20; Luke 9:37–43).

The unnamed restored demoniac in Mark 5 is also commissioned to tell his story in his hometown. He subsequently shared his story of deliverance in the Gentile region of the Decapolis (Mark 5:1–20; Luke 8:26–39). In addition, Luke refers to the unnamed seventy-two (or seventy) sent into evangelistic mission throughout Judah (Luke 10:1–12, 17–20). A number of Jesus' parables also anticipate the evangelistic ministry of Jesus' disciples; especially the Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1–9, 13–20; Matt 13:3–9, 18–23; Luke 8:4–8, 11–15) and the Parable of the Banquet/Wedding feast (Luke 14:12–24; Matt 22:1–14). The final commissioning of Matthew is specifically directed to the Eleven (Matt 28:16). Luke's commissioning specifies the eleven "and those with them" plus the Emmaus road disciples, presupposing the commissioning of a larger group (Luke 24:33, cf. 24:46–39; Acts 1:8).

In John, although there is some anticipation of future mission in John 4:34–38, there is no explicit mention of the sending of disciples for evangelization until the post-resurrection encounter, where an unspecified group of disciples is sent to continue Jesus' mission (John 20:19–22). However, spontaneous evangelization in the sense of disciples

8 J. Schröter, "The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony? A Critical Examination of Richard Bauckham's Jesus and the Eyewitnesses," *JSNT* 31.2 (2008): 202. "It is nevertheless absolutely possible that the persons mentioned in the Gospels are in some cases individuals who experienced the healings or were called as followers and hence became bearers of the concerned traditions. If this assumption is correct, it would enable us to identify some of the bearers of the Jesus tradition by their names." (Emphasis mine).

and others "bringing people to Jesus," is seen through the narrative. These include John the Baptist who directs Andrew and another unnamed disciple to Jesus (John 1:29–36), Andrew who brought Peter (John 1:40–42) and Philip who brought Nathanael (John 1:44–46) and (with Andrew) some Greeks to Jesus (John 12:20–22).<sup>9</sup> John also mentions the unnamed Samaritan woman who brought many from her town to Jesus (John 4:7–42).<sup>10</sup> Additionally, John notes that the disciples of Jesus were baptising new converts, perhaps implying evangelistic activity (John 1:22).<sup>11</sup>

The initial Acts' commission which anticipates the subsequent narrative highlights the general charge that all the disciples give witness to Jesus by the power of the Spirit throughout the world (Acts 1:8). In the narrative, however, it is clear that many were involved in evangelization (e.g. Acts 4:31). These include the Apostles (Acts 4:33; 5:20–21, 25–32, 41–42, cf. 2:43; 5:12, 18)<sup>12</sup> of whom Luke singles

out individuals; especially Peter (e.g. Acts 2:14–41; 3:1–7, 12–26; 4:8–12, 17–20; 5:15–16, 29; 8:14–24; 9:32–11:18) and to a lesser extent,

John (Acts 3:1–2, 11; 4:1, 13, 17–20; 8:14–18), at least in the initial phases.

Some unknown evangelisers are also among those found at Pentecost in Acts 2. These include unspecified people from Parthia, Media, Elam, Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Libya, Rome, Crete and Arabia. These possibly include the likes of Junia and Andronicus who may have established the Roman church<sup>13</sup> and have been witnesses to the resurrection (Rom 16:7).<sup>14</sup>

In Acts 6, the focus turns to the named Seven of Acts (Acts 6:5–6) and especially Stephen (Acts 6:5, 8–7:60) and Philip, who evangelised Samaria and other parts of Judea (Acts 6:5; 8:4–40, 21:8). Then

9 John merely records that Philip told Jesus. This launches a speech of Jesus. It is thus unclear whether Philip actually bought the Greeks to Jesus.

10 Although the healed blind beggar does not bring people to Jesus, he gives witness to him before the authorities (John 9:13–17, 24–34).

11 The reference to a messenger and greatness also implies a sending, although evangelization is not mentioned (John 13:12–20).

12 Reference to the healing ministry of the Apostles suggests evangelization as proclamation was likely alongside healing; further, the arrest of the Apostles suggests active involvement.

13 An idea I came up with myself only to find that others had got there before me. See also Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Woman in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 179. She may be Joanna of the Gospels (Luke 8:3; 24:10, see Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, pp. 181–86).

14 J. D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16* (WBC 38B; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 894.

we read of unnamed non-apostles who took the gospel to Antioch and for the first time, evangelised Gentiles outside of a Jewish setting (Acts 8:4; 11:19–22). Some of these were from Cyprus and Cyrene and may include Simon of Cyrene and/or his sons Rufus and Alexander, Lucius (Acts 13:1) or Mnason (Acts 21:16). Apollos also stands out as an evangeliser who originated in Alexandria and ministered in Ephesus and Corinth (Acts 18:24–19:1). Other key figures aside from the Twelve may have been James the brother of Jesus (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18) and Judas Barsabbas (Acts 15:22, 32), although his involvement in evangelization is not specified. Some of those named in Acts 13:1 *may* have been engaged in evangelization (Simeon and Manaen) as may have Agabus, although he is designated a prophet (Acts 11:28; 21:10); similarly, Philip’s prophetic daughters (Acts 21:9).<sup>15</sup> Texts speaking of the penetration of the gospel into the hinterlands hint at unnamed evangelisers from Pisidian Antioch and Ephesus in particular (Acts 13:49; 19:10–20).<sup>16</sup> From Acts 9 onward, Paul is central to the narrative along with his named mission companions including Barnabas (Acts 4:36; 9:27; 11:22, 25, 30; 12:25; 13:1 – 15:39), John Mark (Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37–39), Timothy (Acts 16:1–3; 17:14–15; 19:22; 20:4), Silas (Acts 15:22–40; 16:19–29; 17:4–15; 18:5) and Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:2–26).

In the letters of Paul, a wide range of other coworkers are listed including Prisca and Aquila (Rom 16:3, cf. 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19); Urbanus (Rom 16:9); Timothy (Rom 16:21; 1 Thess 3:2); Titus (2 Cor 8:23); Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25); Euodia, Syntyche, Clement and unnamed others (Phil 4:2–3); John Mark (cf. 2 Tim 4:11) and Jesus Justus (Col 4:11; Phlm 24);<sup>17</sup> Philemon (Phlm 1); Epaphras, Demas, Luke (Phlm 24) and Silas/Silvanus (2 Cor 1:19; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1). He also makes mention of the Twelve Apostles (Gal 1:19; 2:9), Barnabas, Apollos (1 Cor 3:5–6; 16:12) and other *apostoloi* who

<sup>15</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:23–25 indicates that the prophets included proclamation that would bring conviction to outsiders and unbelievers. The line between prophets, teachers and evangelists is not watertight.

<sup>16</sup> See Keown, *Congregational Evangelism*, 231–51.

<sup>17</sup> Paul also likely understands Aristarchus, Epaphras, Luke, Demas, Archippus (cf. Phlm 2) and Nympha as coworkers (Col 4:8–17). Other may include Phoebe, Junia and Andronicus who may have been apostles; Apelles, Rufus and the “workers” of Rom 16 – Mary, Tryphaena and Tryphosa, Persis; Sosthenes (1 Cor 1:1); Tychicus (Eph 6:21); Erastus (Acts 19:22; Rom 16:23; 2 Tim 4:20); Gaius (Rom 16:23; 1 Cor 1:14) and others mentioned through his letters.

may be evangelizers (2 Cor 8:23, cf. Phil 2:25).<sup>18</sup> Paul endorses Peter’s ministry to the circumcised (Gal 2:7–10). Some of these are also mentioned in other NT writings indicating their significance including Timothy (Heb 13:23), Silas/Silvanus (1 Pet 5:12) and Mark (1 Pet 5:13).

It is certain that there were others involved in evangelisation, whose identities are lost in the mists of time. Such people are implied by the unstoppable spread of the news about Jesus in the Gospel accounts leading to the crowds who sought him out (e.g. Mark 1:24, 45; 2:12). In the Gospels, some of these evangelisers are mentioned but unnamed, such as the demoniac of Mark 5 and the Samaritan woman of John 4. Similarly, it is explicitly stated in Acts that unnamed Christians spread the gospel from Jerusalem after the Sauline persecution, including to Syrian Antioch (Acts 8:4; 11:19–20, above). It is likely that the unnamed Ethiopian Eunuch was at least responsible in part for the spread

of the gospel to Africa (Acts 8:26–39). The presence of disciples in Ephesus indicates that unknown disciples had taken some version of the gospel into Asia (Acts 19:1). Unnamed disciples were responsible

for the evangelization of the hinterlands of Pisidian Antioch and Ephesus (Acts 13:46; 19:10, see above). Further, the presence of Christianity in Rome by the time of the Claudian Edict in AD 49 (Acts 18:2; Suetonius, *Claud.* 25.4) and the emergence of the likes of Apollos from Alexandria (Acts 18:24) indicate that it is likely that Pentecost pilgrims and others disseminated the gospel to places like Rome and North Africa.

#### OTHER POSSIBLE EARLY EVANGELISERS AND THEIR SPHERE OF SIGNIFICANCE

Bauckham’s hypothesis that those named in the Gospels are eyewitnesses to Jesus’ ministry enhances the probability that not only were there were a range of other less known people who had experienced Jesus’ ministry and were involved in initial evangelisation, but some of these are identifiable and some speculations made concerning the range of their engagement.

To do this, I will first consider the extent of the involvement of the four Evangelists who refer to these eyewitnesses and evangelisers, to assess their possible sphere of influence. It is likely that Mark’s Gospel has its origins from Mark and

<sup>18</sup> See Keown, *Congregational Evangelism*, 170–83.

#### IT IS CERTAIN THAT THERE WERE OTHERS INVOLVED IN EVANGELISATION, WHOSE IDENTITIES ARE LOST IN THE MISTS OF TIME ... SOME OF THESE ARE IDENTIFIABLE ...

Peter.<sup>19</sup> Both Peter and Mark were widely travelled including, Jerusalem, Judea, Achaia, eastern Asia and Rome.<sup>20</sup> Assuming that the “we passages” of Acts indicate times Luke was with Paul, he moved widely, including, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Judea, Jerusalem and Rome. Early church tradition also links him with Antioch.<sup>21</sup> Matthew is associated with Syria,<sup>22</sup> and it is likely that the author (perhaps the Apostle Matthew) is intimate with those of influence in the Israel-Syria areas. Traditionally, John is mainly associated with Asia Minor and with the early church in Jerusalem and Judea.<sup>23</sup> As such, some further suggestions can be proffered.

Where a secondary person is specifically named in relation to an event in *all four Gospels*, this person is likely widely known throughout the early church across a good portion of the areas named above. These would include Mary Magdalene (Mark 15:40, 47; 16:1; Matt 27:56, 61; 28:1); Luke 8:2; 24:10; John 19:25 etc.) and Joseph of Arimathea (Mark 15:43; Matt 27:56, 61; 28:1; Luke 23:50; John 19:38). Such people may then have shared their stories widely in church gatherings and where another opportunity for witness was given.

If a person is named in *all three Synoptics*, the person may also be considered an evangeliser in the wider Church, although not necessarily the Asian region. Alternately, they had died or were no longer active in the time of John’s writing, e.g. Mary, Jesus’ mother (Mark 6:3; Matt; 13:55; Luke 1:27 etc.), Simon of Cyrene (Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26; Matt 27:32) and Mary, the mother of James and Joses (Mark 15:40, 47; 16:1; Matt 27:56, 61; 28:1; Luke 24:10).

Where a name is found in *Mark and retained in Matthew*, the person is an eyewitness and potential evangeliser in Jerusalem, Israel and the Syrian

region. Such a person would include Simon the leper (Mark 14:3; Matt 26:6).

The mention of a name in both *Mark and Luke* perhaps indicates that the person is a well-known figure in Jerusalem and Judea and/or Rome, or possibly, in the Pauline circle. Such a person is Jairus (Mark 5:22; Luke 8:41).<sup>24</sup>

Some figures are named only in *Luke and John* and are likely known not only in Jerusalem and Judea but into the Galatians and Asian regions (modern Turkey). These could include Cleopas/Clopas and Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38–40; John 11:1).

Where a name is mentioned directly in *Mark alone*, that person is potentially an evangeliser in Jerusalem and Israel, e.g. Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46) and Salome (Mark 15:40; 16:1). Alternatively, they may be known in Rome, which is particularly possible of Rufus and Alexander (cf. Rom 16:13).

If the person is in *Luke alone*, that person is probably an evangeliser or person of significance in Israel and perhaps more broadly to Rome. Examples may include Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7:40), Joanna wife of Chuza (Luke 8:3) and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:2–8).

Finally, where a name occurs in *John alone*, such as Nathanael (John 1:45), Nicodemus (John 3:1), Lazarus (John 11), Malchus (John 18:10) or Mary of Clopas (John 19:25), we can postulate that these individuals may have been known in the Galatian and Asian regions and may have told their stories there.

**SUCH PEOPLE MAY THEN HAVE SHARED THEIR STORIES WIDELY IN CHURCH GATHERINGS AND WHERE ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY FOR WITNESS WAS GIVEN.**

**IMPLICATIONS FOR THE NATURE OF THE GOSPEL PREACHED**

Exploration of the NT gives us some good insight into the content of the gospel(s) that early Christians preached. These include, particularly, the four Gospels, the speeches of Acts and what can be discerned from the gospel in the letters.<sup>25</sup> First, we have the four Gospels themselves, which are biographical and historical narratives of the life of Jesus. According to tradition supported by Bauckham’s work, these are based on eyewitness

19 See Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 12–21.

20 On Mark – in Jerusalem and Cyprus (Acts 12:12, 25; 13:13; 15:37–39) and in Rome (Col 4:10; 2 Tim 4:11; Phlm 24; 1 Pet 5:13). On Peter – aside from the Gospels and Acts which place him in Judea; Achaia (1 Cor 1:12; 3:22; 9:5), Syria (Gal 2:11–14), Rome (1 Peter) and Asia (1 Pet 1:2).

21 See the Anti-Marcionite Prologue to Luke (ca. 175) which tells readers Luke is from Syrian Antioch, that he was an unmarried doctor who wrote in Achaia and that he died in Boeotia at age 84.

22 See for example C. Blomberg, *Matthew* (NAC 22: Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 34–36.

23 There are of course a range of options for the author. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 358–471 argues for John the Elder. The traditional view, which I find preferable, argues it is John the Apostle, e.g. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (PNTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991, 68–81). Whichever it is, it is likely the author originated in Galilee or Judea and was well known in Asia.

24 There are none named in both Matthew and Luke only or in Matthew only.

25 Although each of these is primarily pastoral and crafted for a specific moment, they give us glimpses of the gospel these writers understood. This is especially so of Roman. Although it is not a systematic absolute presentation of Paul’s gospel, bearing in mind that it is a letter crafted for specific issues in Rome and in preparation for Paul’s mission to Rome and Spain, Romans give us one expression of Paul’s gospel for that particular moment (esp. Rom 1:1–17; 15:14–33).

testimony from Apostles – Matthew, Peter (in the case of Mark) and John.<sup>26</sup> These documents indicate that by the latter decades of the NT, one recognised way of articulating the gospel was to narrate the story of Jesus. These were preserved because they were considered by the early church to be eyewitness accounts.

The speeches of Acts give crisp gospel message summaries from Peter, Stephen and Paul.<sup>27</sup> Peter's messages often include references to the apostles being eyewitnesses to the death and resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39–42). Although not an eyewitness to Jesus' life himself, Paul refers to the Apostles as eyewitnesses to Jesus (Acts 13:31). The two messages of Paul in Acts 22 and 26 centre on Paul's personal experience of encountering Jesus on the Damascus Road and being commissioned to take the gospel to the Gentiles. There are other indicators such as the importance of witness language in John's writings.<sup>28</sup> It is then clear that personal testimony was basic to initial evangelisation. Bauckham's hypothesis indicates that the emphasis on eyewitness experience in evangelisation runs deeper than traditionally believed.

#### EVANGELISING AS PERSONAL TESTIMONY

Bauckham's work adds to our understanding of evangelising as personal testimony. If he is right, not only are the Gospels and the speeches of Acts evidence of eyewitness teaching, but embedded in the text are lesser known figures may also have been important in initial evangelisation. Rather than necessarily being those who carried the office or charismatic function of evangelists, they shared their experience of their personal encounters with Jesus. They likely did so in church communities. These gatherings were primarily believers, but there were likely unbelievers in attendance who heard their testimonies and likely, some became believers (cf. 1 Cor 14:20–25). Not only were they eyewitnesses and sources for aspects of the Gospel stories, but

26 See for a summary H. Gamble, "Canonical Formation of the New Testament," in *Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*, eds. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 184–85, 2.1.1.

27 Peter (Acts 2:14–40; 3:11–26; 4:8–17); Stephen (Acts 7:2–53); Paul (Acts 13:15–41; 14:9–17; 17:22–31; 22:1–21; 26:2–29).

28 The verb "testify, give witness" (*martyreo*) is used thirty-three times in the Gospel and ten in John's letters. The noun "witness" (*martyria*) is used fourteen times in the Gospel and seven times in the letters. 1 John 1:1–4 especially speaks of the eyewitness testimony of the writer.

they were also evangelisers who gave witness to Christ. In a sense, they are living examples of Luke's commission in Acts, filled with the Spirit; they were witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8) – at least in some parts of these areas.

So, in the case of Mary the mother of Jesus, she may have shared her experiences from prior to Jesus' conception to his ministry (Luke 1:5–2:52, cf. Matt 1–2), aspects of his ministry like his turning water to wine (John 2:1–11), his encounters with family (Mark 3:31–35; 6:1–5; Luke 4:16–30) and her experience of his death. Mary Magdalene may have shared stories of her initial conversion and demonic deliverance, Jesus' ministry (Luke 8:2) and Christ's death and resurrection (Mark 15:40; 16:1). Others who gave witness to the empty tomb or appearances of Jesus may have also shared their experiences. This would include not only Peter, but Cleopas/Clopas (Luke 24:18; John 19:25), Thomas (John 20:26–29) and the other Mary (Mark 15:40, 47; 16:1).<sup>29</sup> Joseph of Arimathea, who was likely at Jesus' trial,<sup>30</sup> potentially gave an account of the trial, death and burial of Jesus (Mark 15:43). Some, like Simon of Cyrene and/or his sons Rufus and Alexander (Mark 15:21, cf. Rom 16:13) could well have told the story of Simon being forced by the Romans to carry Jesus' cross. A number perhaps shared of their experiences of healing, such as Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46), Jairus (Mark 5:22; Luke 8:41) and Lazarus (John 11:1–27). Others may have spoken of meals in their homes, like Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38–42), who may also have told of the raising of Lazarus and Jesus' anointing (John 12:1–8). The stories of these living participants in the Jesus' tradition would have been potentially powerful and provocative.

Before the dispersion of Acts 8:1–4 and as the gospel was initially promulgated in the Temple Courts in Acts and from house to house in Jerusalem (Acts 2:46; 5:42), some of these likely shared their stories in the growing community. Perhaps some or other of these figures travelled with the likes of Peter, John, the other apostles and the Seven, including Stephen and Philip, and gave witness with them in the homes of the Roman world. Perhaps we can link those in Luke particularly to Paul's

29 Also Salome (Mark 15:40; 16:1).

30 See Mark 14:55; 15:1 where 'the whole council' were gathered. J. Marcus, *Mark 8–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Yale Bible 27A; New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2009), 1002 notes that the "Sanhedrin" is modified by 'the whole,' suggesting the complete roster of membership of the group." In Mark, this would include Joseph (see Mark 15:43).

ministry (Jerusalem to Rome), those in Mark to Peter (Jerusalem to Rome?), those in Matthew to Matthew (Syria?) and those in John to his work in Asia.

As is now well established, aside from an initial phase in the Temple Courts, the early church was a movement built on small groups which gathered in the homes across the Roman Empire. So, in Jerusalem, these included the likes of the owner of the Upper Room and that of John Mark's mother (Acts 1:13; 12). More widely, the churches gathered in the homes of Simon the Tanner (Acts 9:43; 10:6), Titius Justus (Acts 18:7), Lydia (Acts 16:14), Nympha (Col 4:15), Philemon (Phlm 1), Priscilla and Aquila (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19), Gaius (Rom 16:23) and no doubt many others. It is possible that, to varying degrees and where able, these lesser known evangelisers travelled and shared their stories. Alternately, those who wrote the NT knew these figures directly and shared their stories second-hand, recounting what they had heard from the likes of Bartimaeus, Jairus, Joseph of Arimathea and others. However, the direct use of names in some stories as opposed to others (e.g. the demoniac of Mark 5), is suggestive that these figures were not merely sources, but evangelisers themselves, although the degree of involvement not doubt varied greatly.

This all shows the importance of personal testimony to evangelisation. Indeed, witness as a motif is central to evangelisation, particularly in John and Acts.<sup>31</sup> As Peter and John said to the Sanhedrin in Acts, "we cannot help stop speaking of *what we have seen or heard*" (Acts 4:19), and this is what they did. One gets a picture not merely of individual evangelists giving long sermons as we might today expect in a church or on a street corner, but of numbers of people sharing their stories of experience of Jesus. While there were clearly key figures in initial evangelisation, a full picture of the initial spread of the gospel includes the likes of such lesser-known figures. We get clues to their potential participation in Paul's vision for the gathered church community in 1 Cor 14:26. Paul urged the Corinthians to gather together and bring something to share, whether a hymn, a teaching, a revelation, a message in tongues or an interpretation. Thus we picture a crowd of Christians, men and women, slave and free, Jew and Gentile, gathered together sharing from their gifts and experience for mutual

<sup>31</sup> See e.g. John 1:7; 3:11; 4:39; 5:31-47; 8:13-18; 15:26-27; 21:24; Acts 1:8, 22; 2:32; 3:15; 4:33; 5:32; 10:39, 41, 42; 13:31; 1 John 1:2; 4:14.

edification. This is a far-cry from the modern church gathering we are used to and far more like the home-group gathering in which all share together.

The evangelistic possibilities of Bauckham's work also enhance the claim that women were actively involved in initial gospel proclamation. Paul's letters suggest this is the case, as he refers to significant gospel coworkers and church leaders like Phoebe, Priscilla, Junia, Mary, Persis, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Euodia, Syntyche and Nympha.<sup>32</sup> The naming of other significant women in the Gospel like Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Joses, Mary the mother of Jesus, Salome, Joanna, Martha and Mary is suggestive of their participation as well. The inclusion of Simon the leper also hints that social boundaries were no hindrance to evangelisation (Matt 26:6; Mark 14:3).

This analysis points to a picture of early evangelisation that should not be so focussed on a few significant figures supported by churches in prayer and finance. Rather, while acknowledging that key leaders were important spearheads in the dissemination of the gospel, we have a much more nuanced picture of a wide range of Christians who shared their stories of experiencing salvation and healing in Christ across the empire. The gospel spread not merely through key individuals, but through the whole church as people shared their stories.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it seems that Bauckham's work, aside from being ground-breaking in understanding the origins of the Gospels, has significant potential implications for evangelism. Specifically, his hypothesis helps fill out the answer to questions such as who did evangelism, where they might have operated and what they preached. Namely, we have hints in the names in the Gospels that the gospel initially spread through a wide range of individuals who encountered the ministry of Christ personally and that one of the major components of the content of their "preaching" (for want of a better word) was their personal testimonies. This conclusion reinforces the importance of the sharing of personal stories of encounters with God in evangelism today.

<sup>32</sup> Phoebe (Rom 16:16:1), Priscilla (Acts 18:2, 18-26; Rom 16:3; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19), Junia (Rom 16:7), Mary (Rom 16:6), Persis, Tryphaena and Tryphosa (Rom 16:12), Euodia and Syntyche (Phil 4:2-3) and Nympha (Col 4:15).

**MARK KEOWN** is currently the co-editor of *Stimulus*, a New Testament lecturer at Laidlaw College and a Presbyterian Minister. His academic interests include anything New Testament, Paul and evangelistic theology. Aside from his passionate faith and love of the Scriptures, he is a keen family man and lover of all things sport. He is married to wife Rev Dr Emma Keown and has three daughters, Gracie, Annie and Esther. His publications can be accessed at <https://www.laidlaw.ac.nz/staff/dr-mark-keown/> and his blog at <http://drmarkk.blogspot.co.nz/>).