The Eyewitnesses In The Gospel Of Mark: A Critical Review

Overview

In this article, Richard Bauckham proposes a theory that he believes the reader needs to consider. Baukham proposes that the reader consider this question: “who were the eyewitnesses, the author of Mark used to pen his gospel?” Eyewitnesses play a crucial role in the written tradition; they provided the accounts of events that took place. The witnesses are the critical representatives for keeping the events accurate. The question of “who were the eyewitnesses to the Gospel of Mark?” is a vital one.

Bauckham proposes the author named the eyewitnesses that he used in his Gospel. He proposes that Peter is one of the eyewitnesses that the author used. Bauckham also proposes that the three named women at the empty tomb of Jesus were other eyewitnesses. Bauckham uses a literary device known as “inclusio”[footnoteRef:1] to present his case. Bauckham lays the foundation of his claim that Mark's author used “inclusio” by using the methodology of comparison. Bauckham compared the Gospel of Mark to other non-biblical ancient writings from historians and biographers from the timeframe Mark wrote his Gospel. Bauckham uses these ancient non-biblical sources in order to compel the reader in favor of his argument. [1: . Richard Buackham, “Eyewitnesses to the Gospel of Mark” (Svensk exegetisk arsbok: vol 74, 2009) 19-39]

Bauckham makes his case by presenting the reader with specific writings of Polybius, a famous biographer who had a tremendous influence on writing style around the time Mark wrote his Gospel. Bauckham also provides his readers with the writings of Plutarch, who used inclusio in his writings that parallels that of Mark’s Gospel. Bauckham believes that if the reader considers the genre of Mark as a biography, then the reader will conclude that inclusio is used in Mark to name the eyewitnesses just like the ancient non-biblical biographers of that time.[footnoteRef:2] [2: . Bauckham, 21]

Analysis

Bauckham presents a compelling case for his conclusion that the author of Mark uses “inclusio” to name his eyewitnesses. Bauckham wants the reader to consider his argument, and so he begins with the genre of Mark. Bauckham knows that the genre that the author uses will determine how the reader interprets the reading.[footnoteRef:3] Bauckham argues that Mark is a biography; he knows if the reader takes hold of this claim then he can compare Mark to other biographies. Bauckham further bolsters and strengthens his claim of “inclusio” by comparing the references to Peter in Mark with those references in Luke. Bauckman then reassures the reader that Luke names his sources explicitly.[footnoteRef:4] When the reader has assurances that Luke names his sources explicitly, then one would assume they would reach the same conclusion in Mark when comparing the number of references of named persons. [3: . Bauckham, 21] [4: . Bauckham, 23]

Bauckham looks to further bolster his claims by comparing Mark to the other non-biblical ancient writings. Bauckham wants to draw parallels between the biographies of Polybius, Scipio in

Spain,[footnoteRef:5] and Plutarch’s Life of Julius Ceaser.[footnoteRef:6] Bauckham lays a clear case using the multiple references to Gauis Laelius in Scipio in Spain to show that he is the eyewitness that helped write the account of Scipio. He then uses Plutarch’s Life of Julius Ceaser to show the importance of direct eyewitness accounts of an event. He then compares that importance and naming of Asinius Pollio and compares that to the three women in the passion account to show that they were eyewitnesses. Bauckham’s formation and methodology of comparison made for a compelling case; I personally have never considered. [5: . Bauckham, 26] [6: . Bauckham, 33]

Bibliography

Bauckham, Richard. Svensk exegetisk a?rsbok, vol. 74, pp. 19–39. 2009. http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.regent.edu:2048/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0001749514&site=ehost-live (accessed October 11, 2019).