

Synoptic Gospels

December 2025–February 2026
Auditorium class
Church of Christ in Humble

The class is encouraged to read the material for each class *before* that class.

It will be helpful if you open your Bible and refresh your mind by looking at the Scriptures cited for each lesson.

Suggestion: Make notes in the margin, on the back of the page, or on a separate note tablet for future reference when studying these gospels.

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Acronyms

AEFE = *An Examination of the Four Evangelists*, Simon Greenleaf

Cambridge = *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*, J.J.S. Perowne, ed.
(Cambridge University Press. Pub. in 1882-1921.) eSword.

EGT = *Expositor's Greek Testament* (published by Eerdmans Publishing Company,
Grand Rapids, MI)

FSLC = *Studies in the Life of Christ*, R. C. Foster (Baker, 1975)

GIB = Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*
(Moody Press, Chicago, 1979)

HSB = William Hendriksen, *Survey of the Bible* (Baker Book House, 1976)

NT = New Testament

OT = Old Testament

RSG = James Hardy Ropes, *The Synoptic Gospels* (First Published 1934; Second
Impression with New Preface, London: Oxford University Press, 1960)

RWP = Robertson, A. T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Broadman Press,
Nashville, TN, 1932)

INTth = *Introduction to the New Testament*, Henry Theissen (Eerdmans, 1973)

VWS - Word Studies, Marvin R. Vincent

I. What, When, Who for? Source?

What are the “Synoptic” Gospels?

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called “synoptic” gospels because their accounts are parallel to one another, i.e., they take a generally similar (syn) view (optic) of Christ’s life. John’s gospel does not contradict the synoptics, but merely presents the life of Christ from a distinct viewpoint.

For example, read and compare **Mt 3:1-6, Mk 1:1-6, Lk 3:1-6**. What do these three accounts discuss? _____

Note some of the differences. _____

When were the Synoptics written?

1. 1st-2nd century - MSS, versions, and quotations indicate their existence.
2. Pre AD 70 - no mention of the destruction of Jerusalem as having taken place.
3. Luke written pre 63 AD, for he said his gospel preceded Acts. Compare **Acts 1:1-2** with **Lk 24:44-53**. Acts was written c. 62-63AD (**Ac 25:11; 26:32; 28:16,30-31**). If Matthew and/or Mark predated Luke, then they would be even earlier.

What value is there in knowing when these were written? _____

(Compare three historical accounts of a controversial individual written within 50 years of their death, in the place where that person lived, and in the language they spoke, versus one or more written 500 years after their death, in some place far away where no one had interaction with the individual, and in another language.)

Who were the Synoptics written for?

Matthew - for Jewish readers; Mark - for Roman readers; Luke - for Gentile readers. (John - general)

Note: This may be helpful, but cannot be established conclusively. Following lessons will explore this more fully.

Ultimately, who did God intend the Gospels for? Mk 1:1...16:15-16 _____

Where did the writers get what they wrote?

1. Eyewitnesses, e.g., **Mt 9:9; 10:2**
2. Testimony from eyewitnesses, e.g., **Lk 1:2**
3. Other reliable written or oral sources, e.g., **Lk 1:1; Ac 20:35**
4. Inspiration of the Holy Spirit. **Eph 2:20; 3:4-5**. Two of the Gospel writers were apostles: Matthew and John. Two were prophets: Mark and Luke.

For the moment, ignore #4 (inspiration of the Holy Spirit). Now, should the Gospels be admitted into a discussion of who Jesus is? Why? _____

(Can you think of things *you* believe based on the type of data in #1-3?) _____

● *If these books are credible history, they are strong testimony to the “gospel”!*

II. Historical Credibility of these Documents

Age: How Old Are These Books?

Illustration: You can derive some idea as to how old the songs in our songbook (“*Hymns for Worship*”) are by looking at certain indicators.

1. See the title page (very front of the book). Note the editors— Based on this data, what is the latest date these songs could have been written? _____

2. See the *copyright date* and *date this edition was printed*. Based on this data, what is the *latest* date these songs could have been written? _____

3. Based on the coloration of the paper (faded? soiled?), condition of the pages and cover (worn? ragged?), is your copy one recently made, or does it show signs of age? _____

4. Look at the song, “*A Mighty Fortress,*” p16. Who is the author of that song and what does it tell you about when the song was written? _____

Manuscripts (hand-written copies), **Versions** (translations into other languages), **Quotations** (by men who referred to Scriptures in their writings), and **Lectionaries** (portions of Scripture used in the worship services of early churches) are sources from which translators have derived the translations of the Bible over centuries, and these help to certify the original age of our gospels.

Manuscripts (5800+)

- **Alexandrian MSS** [A] - 375-425 AD — N.T. except (lacks the following) Matthew up to 25:6; two leaves from John, including 6:50-8:52, and three leaves from 2 Corinthians, including 4:13-12:6. British Museum
- **Sinaitic MSS** [Hebrew Aleph, Ⲁ] - 300-350 AD — Includes all books of N.T.; British Museum
- **Vatican MSS** [B] - 300-350 AD—NT ends at Heb 9:14. Vatican Library, Rome
- **Chester Beatty Papyri** [p45] - 150 AD—Eleven papyrus codices. One contains the four gospels and Acts and dates to the first half of the 2nd century. Beatty Museum, Dublin.
- **John Rylands MSS** [p52] - 130 AD - Jn 18:31-33,37-38. John Ryland Library, Manchester, England

Versions (19,000+)

Three primary groups: Syriac; Egyptian; Latin. Together they contain all NT books. Dated by scholars to the 2nd century (100’s), though our copies are not that old.

Quotations/Paraphases (19,000+ just of the gospels)

Some of the writers (dates are the dates of their death): Justin Martyr c. 165—268; Irenaeus c. 202—1,038; Clement of Alexandria c. 215—1,017; Origen c. 254—9,231; Tertullian c. 220—3,822; Hippolytus c. 235—734; Eusebius c. 339—3,258 = 19,368.

Lectionaries (2000+)

Accuracy: Are These Sources Reliable?

“Fenton John Anthony Hort, whose life work has been with the MSS...‘the amount of what can in any sense be called substantial variation is but a small fraction of the whole residuary variation, and **can hardly form more than a thousandth part of the entire text.**” ETDV, p. 44. Fenton John Anthony Hort, 1828-1892 A.D., was a renowned textual scholar of the 19th century and served on the committee of the English Revised Version in the 1880s. [bold mine]

Simon Greenleaf, LL.D., Royal Professor of Law at Harvard University [1833-1848 A.D.: “If any ancient document concerning our public rights were lost, copies which had been as universally received and acted upon as the Four Gospels have been, **would have been received in evidence in any of our courts of justice, without the slightest hesitation.**” AEFÉ, pp. 27,28

Authorship: Did Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John write the Gospels?

Testimony of “witnesses” ...

- **Matthew** - Papias (c.80-c.155); Irenaeus (c.140-203); Origen (c.185-253)
- **Mark** - Papias (c.80-c.155); Irenaeus (c.140-203); “Clement of Alexandria (c.155-c.215), Tertullian (c.150-222), Origen (c.185-253), Eusebius (c.265-340)
- **Luke** - Muratorian Fragment (c. 170); Irenaeus (c.140-203); Clement of Alexandria (c.155-c.215); Internal evidence that the same writer wrote Acts. Compare the end of Luke and the beginning of Acts. “We” sections and medical language in Acts strongly favor Lukan authorship.
- **John** - Theophilus of Antioch (c. 115-188); Muratorian Fragment (c. 170);

Conclusion

What? When? Who? Why? How?

- **What?** - The *historical* sources for our faith: four books called the “gospels.”
- **When?** - Written in the *first century*.
- **Who?** - *Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John* wrote them.
- **Why were they written?** **Jn 20:30-31; Mk 1:1....16:15-16; Lk 1:4** _____

- **How?** - With care and concern for *truth*. **Lk 1:1-4; Jn 19:35; 21:24**

Thus we have four books dating to the first century, three of which were written within forty years of the events they relate (before the destruction of Jerusalem - another criterion of credibility), written by men who were either eyewitnesses or obtained their information from eyewitnesses (the two highest standards of credibility for historical writings), and preserved with remarkable accuracy. They were all written to record the good news about Jesus, and two expressly claimed care and truthfulness for their record.

The “Gospel of Jesus Christ” will stand or fall upon the testimony of these historical documents.

III. "Gospels"

"Gospel" = "good news" - Good news of the grace of God extended toward sinful man through Jesus Christ.

According to Matthew's account, why was the name "Jesus" chosen? **Mt 1:21** _____

What "good news" did Mark provide in his gospel? **Mk 1:1...16:15,16.** _____
See also **Rom 1:16,17.**

In Luke's record of his last discussion with the apostles, what did He say was written about the "Christ" that they would preach to all the nations? **Lk 24:44-47** _____

What is the kernel of the gospel? **1Co 15:1-4** _____

The Gospels present Jesus as the "Christ," the "Anointed"

- **Prophet** - through whom God revealed the true grace for mankind. A prophet is Jehovah's mouthpiece to present His message—the Gospels over and over again make it clear that this is what Jesus did, **Mt 4:17,23**. But, he was the *ultimate* prophet, "the" Prophet of prophecy (**Dt 18:18-19; Jn 1:21,25; Ac 3:22-26**) and able to reveal God and His will completely and authoritatively—**Jn 1:17,18; 12:48-50** ("not...but" in John, e.g. **Jn 7:16**).
- **Priest** - through whom man is reconciled to God. **Heb 7:26-27** ("holy, innocent, undefiled ... for the sins of the people ... offered up himself"). The Gospels show Christ came for the purpose of dying and offering his life for the sins of men, **Mt 20:28; 26:28**.
- **King** - through whom God rules for man's redemption. **Lk 1:32-33, 68-71...77; 24:26; Mk 16:19**

"Anointed" is the English term. "Christ" is a Greek term that means "Anointed." What is the Hebrew term for "Christ"? **Jn 1:41** _____

The gospels are intended to provide the information that will build FAITH in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God:

Mt 1:1,21 ... 28:19-20

Mk 1:1 ... 16:15-16

Lk 1:1-4 ... 24:46-47

Jn 1:12-14 ... 20:30-31

How did Paul say men come to have faith? **Ro 10:17** _____

What did he say is the result of this faith? **Ro 10:10** _____

What must men believe to experience this result? **Ro 10:9** _____

This explains why he devoted his life to teaching and preaching the Gospel!

IV. Overview

Portraits versus biographies

The Gospels are not biographies in the sense that they intend to give all the details of the life of Christ, but are portraits of a person—a person lost men must come to trust in as their Savior. Understanding the nature of the Gospels will encourage a proper use of them and explain supposed “discrepancies.” The following highlights this nature and purpose of these books.

Percentage of the gospels covering the last week of Christ

	<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>	<u>John</u>
Total verses (KJV)	1071	678	1151	879
Percentage				
• Chapters	29%	38%	23%	48%
• Pages	34%	39%	23%	47%
• Verses	36%	37%	24%	39%
Last week begins	21:1	11:1	19:28	12:1

What event do the Synoptics record beginning in **Mt 21:1, Mk 11:1, Lk 19:28**? (Compare **Jn 12:12**) _____

Large portions of the life of Christ are omitted, e.g., first thirty years. John deals with events of only about 20-30 days of his life on earth, and chapters 13-19, 237 of 879 total verses in the book, 1/4 of the total book records events of but one day.

Where the “gospels” begin

<u>John</u>	<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Luke</u>	<u>Mark</u>
Eternity (Eternal God) Jn 1:1,14	Abraham (genealogy) Mt 1:1	John’s birth 30 (forerunner) Lk 1:5,13	John’s ministry Mk 1:2-4

Three basic divisions

The synoptic gospels can be divided into three basic divisions:

- **PREPARATION:** Events *before* the ministry of Christ
- **PROGRESS:** Events *during* the ministry of Christ
- **PINNACLE:** Events during the *last week* of the ministry of Christ, **plus the resurrection and ascension**

Following are four possibilities to reflect these three divisions ...

	<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>
Preparation	Mt 1:1-2:23		Lk 1:1-2:52
Progress	Mt 3:1-20:34	Mk 1:1-10:52	Lk 3:1-19:27
Pinnacle	Mt 21:1-28:20	Mk 11:1-16:20	Lk 19:28-24:53
Preparation	Mt 1:1-3:12	Mk 1:1-8	Lk 1:1-3:20
Progress	Mt 3:13-20:34	Mk 1:9-10:52	Lk 3:21-19:27
Pinnacle	Mt 21:1-28:20	Mk 11:1-16:20	Lk 19:28-24:53
Preparation	Mt 1:1-3:17	Mk 1:1-11	Lk 1:1-3:38
Progress	Mt 4:1-20:34	Mk 1:12-10:52	Lk 4:1-19:27
Pinnacle	Mt 21:1-28:20	Mk 11:1-16:20	Lk 19:28-24:53
Preparation	Mt 1:1-4:11	Mk 1:1-13	Lk 1:1-4:13
Progress	Mt 4:12-20:34	Mk 1:14-10:52	Lk 4:14-19:27
Pinnacle	Mt 21:1-28:20	Mk 11:1-16:20	Lk 19:28-24:53

- The **first** group begins the “Progress” (Christ’s ministry) **with *John’s ministry***.
- The **second** group begins the “Progress” (Christ’s ministry) **with *his baptism by John*** (after John’s ministry).
- The **third** group begins the “Progress” (Christ’s ministry) **with *the temptation*** (after his baptism by John).
- The **fourth** group begins the “Progress” (Christ’s ministry) ***after the temptation***.

Other designations for the three groups:

- Commencement
- Continuation
- Culmination

Compare: **Ac 1:22**, “beginning with the baptism of John”; **10:37-38**, “after the baptism which John proclaimed”; **1Jn 5:6-8**, “by water and blood” - baptism and death

Time Period

Ministry: c. 3+ yrs. - Based on feasts in John. (Taking **5:1** to be a Passover feast)

What do the following verses from John have in common?

Bap., temp.(40 days)	Jn. 2:13,23	5:1	6:4	12:1	Resurr., 40 days
Feasts:	1		2		3		4		
Years:		1		2		3			

Life: Based on **Lk 3:23** and the information above from John about the length of his ministry, approximately how old was Christ when he was crucified? _____

Dates: c. BC 4–AD 30

V. Matthew and Luke — Genealogy of Jesus

What is Matthew’s opening statement? **Mt 1:1** _____

Luke’s genealogy is different. Matthew traces the royal line, and Luke the blood line.

Neither Mark nor John has a genealogy.

Who does Matthew trace the genealogy through? **Mt 1:16** _____

Contrast Luke’s statement—what does Luke say about this same person in the genealogy of Jesus? **Lk 3:23** _____

In Matthew’s genealogy, who was David the father of? **Mt 1:6** _____

In Luke’s genealogy, who was David the father of? **Lk 3:31** _____

This illustrates the difference in the two genealogies. Starting with David in **Mt 1:6** and going forward toward Jesus, compare Luke’s genealogy beginning with David in **Lk 3:31** and going backward toward Jesus.

What two prominent names did Matthew put at the head of his genealogy? **Mt 1:1** _____

Due to covenants made with these two men (**Gen 12:1-3; 2Sam 7:8-17**), they were key in the promise of the Messiah and his lineage.

Comparing Luke’s genealogy, these two men appear in the list with no distinction from the other names (**3:31,34**) as Mathew did (**1:1**).

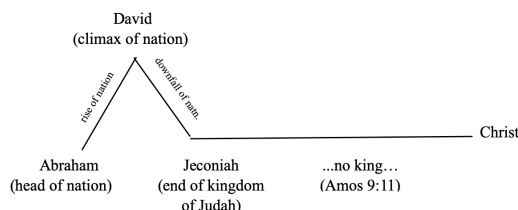
How far back does Matthew’s genealogy go? **Mt 1:1** _____

How far back does Luke’s genealogy go? **Lk 3:38** _____

Matthew arranged his genealogy into three clearly defined groups of 14 each, **Mt 1:17**.

- **Abraham to David** = Patriarchs - rise of nation (14 including David)
- **David to Jeconiah** = Kings (royal line - throne of David) - downfall of nation (14 beginning with Solomon and counting Jeconiah)
- **Jeconiah to Christ** = Citizens - no king (counting Jeconiah, or, the deportation)

The nature of Matthew’s genealogy, emphasizing as it does Abraham and David, tracing the royal line of the throne of David, and being a genealogy based on Jewish law, certainly adapts itself to the Jewish reader. And whether Matthew’s purpose in arranging his genealogy into three groups of fourteen was to aid remembrance, this feature of his genealogy certainly adapts itself well to aiding the believing Jew to be ready to answer his unbelieving Jewish neighbor.



VI. Matthew - Jewish Gospel

Comparing Matthew with the other Synoptics as well as with John indicates that he particularly had a Jewish audience in view.

Genealogy

The nature of Matthew's genealogy points to a Jewish audience (last lesson).

Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy

Jews expecting a Messiah due to OT prophecy. Any one they would accept as the Messiah must be shown to be the fulfillment of these prophecies.

What phase occurs repeatedly in the following scriptures? **1:22; 2:15,17,23; 4:14; 5:17; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14** (compare **Jn 12:38-41**, esp. v41); **13:35; 21:4; 26:54; 26:56; 27:9; 27:35**. (15 times counting 27:35 - KJV, NKJV)

Compare:

- In Mark only 3 times: **1:15; 14:49; 15:28**.
- In Luke 5 times: **4:21; 21:22; 22:16; 22:37; 24:44**.
- In John 7 times: **12:38; 13:18; 15:25; 17:12; 19:24,28,36**. Note - none until ch. 12.

Multiplied quotations from the Old Testament

The Jew who believed in God recognized the Old Testament as the Word of God and was familiar with it, hearing it read every Sabbath in the synagogues. This would be a common and familiar standard of authority.

Matthew has at least 44 clear quotations of the OT, and six allusions to the OT. **Read samples from the Scriptures below to see the idea.**

- Clear quotations introduced in the text as such (42): **1:23; 2:6,15,18; 3:3; 4:4,6,7,10,15-16, 5:21,27,31,33,38,43; 8:17; 9:13; 11:10; 12:7,18-21; 13:14-15,35; 15:4a,4b,8-9; 19:5,7,18-19; 21:5,13a,13b,16,42; 22:24,32,37,39,44; 23:39; 24:15; 26:31; 27:9-10**
- Clear quotations though not introduced in the text as such (2): **23:39; 27:46**
- Allusions: **2:23; 19:4; 21:13b; 23:38; 24:29-31; 26:64**

Compare:

- Mark has approximately 25. Only 19 of these 25 are introduced as quotes in the text.
- Luke has approximately 30. Only 19 of these are introduced as quotes in the text.
- John has approximately 14. Only 12 of these are introduced as quotes.

Based on verses (KJV - Mt = 1071; Mk = 678; Lk = 1151; Jn = 879)

Mark is 63% the size of Mt.	63% x 44 = 28
Luke is 7% longer than Mt.	44 + 7% = 47
John is 82% the size of Mt.	82% x 44 = 36

Emphasis on the kingdom

The Jews were expecting a “kingdom” of prophecy and a Messiah to inaugurate that kingdom. To be the Messiah, Jesus must be shown to be that King.

▶ How is he referred to 9 times in Matthew? _____

Mt 1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30,31; 21:9,15; 22:42

Only 4 times in Mark - **10:47,48; 12:35,37**

Only 5 times in Luke - **1:32; 18:38,39; 20:41,44**

One time in John - **7:42**

According to **2Sam 7:8-16**, the promised King would be from whose dynasty? _____

▶ “Kingdom of heaven” occurs 32 times in Matthew - none in the other gospels. Compare **Dan 2:44; 7:13-14**.

▶ The word “kingdom” occurs 56 times in the gospel of Matthew.

- 32 times, “kingdom of heaven”
- 13 times, “kingdom”
- 7 times, “kingdom of God,” “kingdom of ... Father,” “Father’s kingdom”
- 4 times, not in reference to the kingdom of God

By comparison:

- * In Mark - 21 times
 - 15 times, “k. of God”
 - 1 time, “kingdom”
 - 5 times, not in reference to the k. of God
- * In Luke - 46 times
 - 33 times, “k. of God”
 - 8 times, “kingdom”
 - 5 times, not in reference to the k. of God
- * In John - 5 times
 - 2 times, “k. of God”
 - 3 times, “kingdom”

▶ Only gospel that title “King of the Jews” is not saved for the closing chapters. Found in Matthew at the beginning, **Mt 2:2**. (reference to his role as king in **Lk 1:32,33**, though this title not used)

The Jews were expecting a “kingdom” of prophecy and the Messiah to inaugurate that kingdom. To be the Messiah, he must be that king.

Jewish expressions not explained

If for Jewish readers, there would be no need to explain Jewish expressions.

Read samples from the following to see the idea and make notes in comparison with the other Gospels.

- **Mt 15:2 vs. Mk 7:2-4** _____
- **Mt 27:57...62 vs. Mk 15:42; Lk 23:54; Jn 19:42** _____
- **Mt 26:17 vs. Mk 14:12; Lk 22:7** _____

Unique commands and statements

Matthew is the only gospel in which these commands and statements are recorded: **10:5-6; 15:24; 18:17.**

- On **10:5-6**, compare **Mk 6:7-13, Lk 9:1-6**. What is found in Matthew's gospel that is not in the other Synoptics? _____
- On **Mt 15:24**, compare **Mk 7:24-30**. What is found in Matthew's gospel that is not in Mark? _____

Only Matthew records

- Judas' regret and the purchase of "Field of Blood" **27:3-10**
- "His blood be on us and our children," **27:25**. Compare **Ac 5:28**.
- Of the sealing of the stone, the setting of the guard, and the fabrication of the story of the guards sleeping, **27:62-66; 28:11-15**
- Rising of the "saints" when Christ died, **27:51-52**

Prominent mention of Pharisees and Sadducees

Pharisees and Sadducees were Jewish opponents of Christianity in the gospels and Acts.

- Matthew - Pharisees, 29; Sadducees, 7 = total 36
- Mark - Pharisees, 12; Sadducees, 1 = total 13
- Luke - Pharisees, 21; Sadducees, 1 = total 22
- John - Pharisees 20; Sadducees, 0 = total 20

Sermon on the mount

Matthew's account of the sermon on the mount includes matters of special interest and application to Jewish readers:

- "You have heard..." etc. **5:21,27**, etc. - i.e., from your Jewish teachers, **v20**. Note **7:29**.
- **6:1-8**
- **6:16-18**

Compare **Lk 6:17-49**. Whether this is the same sermon or not, comparison can be made noting that while Luke records Jesus discussing similar topics as **Mt 5** and **Mt 7**, he omits the previous two topics in **Mt 6:1-8** and **Mt 6:16-18**.

The New Testament letters were written to meet needs. Matthew is no exception. What need did it meet? ...

The apostles were commissioned to preach the gospel first "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria," **Ac 1:8**. Three thousand Jews obeyed the gospel in Jerusalem the first day, **Ac 2:41**. Within a short time, "the number of the men came to be about five thousand," **Ac 4:4**. "The number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem," **Ac 6:7**, so that it would not be unreasonable to suppose the early church comprised fifteen to twenty-five thousand Jewish Christians within a few short years. But, they faced persecution from the beginning from the unbelieving Jews. The persecution became so intense that the disciples were forced to scatter from Jerusalem, except the apostles, **Ac 8:1-3**. They took their faith with them, however, and preached the gospel to their Jewish brethren wherever opportunity presented itself, **Ac 8:4, 11:19**. Denial and persecution followed, **Ac 13:45,50, 14:2,5,19,22**, etc. This was the ongoing story in at least the first 35-40 years of the early church.

In the face of such a situation, would not a life of Christ that confirmed the faith of Jewish believers and refuted their opponents by showing that Jesus, instead of “abolishing the law and the prophets,” indeed “fulfilled” them, **Mt 5:17**, serve a great purpose?

Matthew answers the call, proving conclusively the “good news” that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed “the son of David, the son of Abraham,” **Mt 1:1**, “the King of the Jews,” **Mt 2:2, 27:37**, “the hope of Israel,” **Ac 26:6-7, 28:20**, and the triumphant Savior of all mankind, **Mt 28:18-20!**

In accord with this need, the apostles were commissioned and equipped to do two things—what are they?

- **Mt 28:19** _____

- **Mt 28:20** _____

VII. Mark - Roman Gospel?

That Mark was written by Mark for Roman readers rests on two sources of evidence: external evidence of early writers; internal evidence of the nature of his writing.

External evidence

Eusebius (260-340 AD) says Peter went to Rome and preached, after which the Roman Christians wanted the gospel he preached in writing and entreated Mark to leave them such, which he did. According to Eusebius, Clement of Alexandria (150-220 AD) and Papias (50-60 AD) confirm this story.

Internal evidence

1. Semitic (or Aramaic) terms of expression translated into Greek.

What does “Talitha cum” (or, “Talitha cumi”) mean? **Mk 5:41** _____

3:17; 5:41; 7:11, 34; 14:36; 15:22, 34. However, note that the two of these paralleled in Matthew are also translated in Matthew: **Mt 27:33, 46.** The other five are not paralleled in Matthew, except **Mk 14:36** where Matthew simply says, “My Father.”

2. Explanations in Mark of Jewish customs favor that he was writing with the non-Jewish reader in mind. E.g., (Make notes of what Mark explains in each of these.)

- **Mk 7:2-4** compared with **Mt 15:2** _____

- **Mk 14:12** compared with **Mt 27:57...62** _____

- **Mk 15:42** compared with **Mt 26:17** _____

3. Latinisms (rendering Greek into Latin). E.g.,

- **Mk 6:27**, “executioner” - “Latin word *speculator*” RWP

- **Mk 7:4**, “pitchers” - “The original word thus translated is one of St Mark’s Latinisms. It is a corruption of the Latin *sextarius*, a Roman measure both for liquids and dry things.” Cambridge

- **Mk 12:42**, “small copper coins” [“Gr. *lepta*”] which amount to a cent” [*Gr. quadrans*] (Latin origin).

- **Mk 15:16**, “that is, the Praetorium” (Latin origin). This word also occurs in **Mt 27:27; Jn 18:28,33; 19:9; Ac 23:35; Php 1:13.**

- **Mk 15:15**, “to content the multitude [ASV] ... A Latin idiom” RWP

- **Mk 15:15**, “scourged” - “certainly a Latinism, from *flagellare*” EGT

- **Mk 15:39**, “The centurion ... A Latin word (*centurio*) used also in Mar 15:44 and here only in the N.T.” RWP

4. Absence of those things that point to Jewish focus like in Matthew's gospel (see above on Matthew) indicates Mark is for a non-Jewish reader. However, this does not indicate any special class of non-Jewish reader, i.e. Roman.
5. Rufus - Some point to the fact that Mark is the only gospel to mention Rufus as the son of Simon (**Mk 15:21**) who was forced to bear Jesus' cross, and this indicates a Roman audience. This conjecture is based on this being the same Rufus as **Rom 16:13** and that he was well known in Rome.

6. Style: action and power

- a. "Immediately" 40 times, NASB. (Matthew - 18; Luke - 16; John - 6). **For example, and to get a feel of how many times Mark uses this word, read Mk 1:10,12,18,20,21,28,29, 30,42,43.**

This may relate to the Romans (power, action, conquest, city life?), but may simply have been a characteristic of the author—the way he thought and wrote.

b. 18 miracles and only 5 parables.

- 18 specific miracles Jesus worked in Mark: **1:23-28; 1:29-31; 1:40-45; 2:1-12; 3:1-6; 4:35-41; 5:1-20; 5:21-34; 5:35-43; 6:30-44; 6:47-52; 7:24-30; 7:31-37; 8:1-9; 8:22-26; 9:14-29; 10:46-52; 11:12-21.** (plus **1:32-34,39; 3:10; 6:56**)

- Matthew - 19 miracles; Luke - 20 miracles; John - 8 miracles.

- Comparisons considering the length of the Gospels

Based on verses in the KJV (*Unger's Bible Handbook*), Mark is 63% as large as Matthew, 59% of Luke, and 77% of John.

To have recorded the same percentage of miracles as Mark did, Matthew would have had to record 28, Luke 30, and John 23 (Mt - 63% of 28 = 18; Lk - 59% of 30 = 18; Jn - 77% of 23 = 18). But, Matthew only recorded 19 miracles, Luke 20, and John 8. So, clearly, if relative length is taken into account, Mark clearly predominates in recorded miracles.

Another way to look at it is this. Matthew recorded 19 miracles. But if he had recorded miracles at the same percentage as Mark based on length of the books, he would have recorded 28. So, he recorded 68% of the number of miracles Mark did comparatively— based on length of the two books ($19 \div 28 = 68\%$). This is 32% less (100%-32%) than Mark (comparatively). Luke = 33% less ($20 \div 30 = 67\%$). John = 65% less ($8 \div 23 = 35\%$).

- Interestingly, how did Mark close his gospel to further assure the reader of the truth of his Gospel, **Mk 16:16-20?** _____

-
- Mark's 5 parables: **4:1-20; 4:26-29; 4:30-32; 12:1-12; 13:28-29.** Or, if count **2:21; 2:22; 4:21-22,** 8 parables.

By comparison, Matthew has 15 parables. Or, if count **5:14-16; 7:24-27; 9:16; 9:17; 18:12-13; 25:32-33,** 21 parables. Luke has 22 parables. Or, if count **5:36; 5:37-38; 6:47-49; 8:16; 11:33; 12:35-40; 12:42-48,** 29 parables. John has no parables.

- Thus, there are approximately three times more parables in Matthew than there are in Mark, and four times more parables in Luke. Compare this with the number of miracles recorded.
- c. Jesus' words
- “...Mark's brevity relates especially to *the words of Jesus*. Nevertheless, the number of verses in Mark *that contain such words* (some verses have only one or two of them) is not small: 278. They occur especially in chapters 2, 4, 7, 9, 10, and 12. Luke has 588 verses containing dominical words, Matthew 640. Accordingly, while such words are found in approximately 60% of Matthew's 1068 verses, and in about 51% of Luke's 1147, [about 50% of John, *Unger's Bible Handbook*] they occur in only about 42% of Mark's 661. Mark is definitely the *action Gospel*.” Hendriksen, intro to Commentary on Mark.
- d. The Roman empire was represented in prophecy as one of strength and dominion, **Dan 2:40; 7:7,19,23**. Some have suggested Mark's style is “peculiarly Roman and soldierly” and that it “bears a close resemblance to *Caesar's commentaries* in its rapidity of movement and dramatic effect.” (*Dickson Analytical Bible*, p. 1155). Whether Mark is written for Romans or not we may not be able to be certain, but its style would fit an audience born and bred in an atmosphere of rule, power, and action. It would point the reader to a higher power, and confirm the Christian in his faith in the power of Christ.

The internal evidence would harmonize with a focus on the Roman reader, but it is not conclusive that this was Mark's focus, nor is the evidence as strong as the evidence that Matthew was written for the Jew. However, there is nothing in the internal evidence to militate against it, and it does have external support.

Whether Mark especially had the Roman reader in view or not, it is clear **what** he intended to record and **why**. Read these two passages and answer the “What?” and “Why?” **Mk 1:1... 16:15-16.**

VIII. Luke

Is Luke the author of the Gospel of Luke?

That Luke is the author of the Gospel of Luke is supported by external and internal evidence.

External

Jerome (400 AD) says, “Luke, a medical man” and “a companion in all his [Paul] travels ... wrote the Gospel.” Eusebius (260-340 AD) also attributes the Gospel (and Acts) to Luke the physician. Likewise, Origen (185-254 AD), Tertullian (155-240 AD), Clement of Alexandria (150-220 AD), the Muratorian Fragment (c. 180-200 AD), and Irenaeus (125-202 AD) attribute the Gospel to Luke. [dates are approximate]

Internal

1. Luke was a physician, **Col 4:14**.
 - a. Compare **Lk 4:38** with **Mt 8:14** and **Mk 1:30**. What does Luke add that is not in Matthew and Mark? _____
 - b. Compare **Lk 5:12** with **Mt 8:2** and **Mk 1:40**. What does Luke add that is not in Matthew and Mark? _____
 - c. Compare **Lk 6:6** with **Mt 12:10** and **Mk 3:1**. What does Luke add that is not in Matthew and Mark? _____
 - d. Compare **Lk 22:50** with **Mt 26:51** and **Mk 14:47**. What does Luke add that is not in Matthew and Mark? _____
 - e. Other examples: **Lk 5:18**, compared with **Mt 9:2,6** and **Mk 2:3,5,9** (“Luke’s phrase is the technical medical term (Hippocrates, Galen, etc.) rather than Mark’s vernacular word (Ramsay, *Luke the Physician*, pp. 57f.)” RWP); **Lk 18:25** compared with **Mt 19:24** and **Mk 10:25** (“βελονη means originally the point of a spear and then a surgeon’s needle. Here only in the N.T. **Mk 10:25**; **Mt 19:24** have ραφιδος for needle.” RWP)
 - f. Being a physician adds another perspective to the miracles he recorded involving the human mind and body.
2. The similarity of Luke and Acts in style of writing points to the author of Acts being the same as the author of Luke. Since Luke wrote Acts c. 63 AD, the Gospel of Luke was written earlier. (Luke said his gospel preceded Acts: compare **Acts 1:1-2** with **Lk 24:44-53**. Acts was written c. 62-63AD—**Ac 25:11**; **26:32**; **28:16,30-31**.)

Did Luke write his Gospel for Gentile readers?

You will find this stated widely in literature about the Gospels. What is the evidence?

1. Luke was the only Gentile writer of the four Gospels. Compare **Col 4:11...14**. Paul indicates Luke is not of what group? _____
2. Luke specifically addressed his gospel to whom? **Lk 1:3**? _____
Some say this person was a Gentile, but we cannot be certain.

3. According to those who know Greek, his opening style corresponded to Greek historians, and his Greek shows a particularly strong command of the Greek language. But again, does this point to a Greek audience?
4. He begins his dating from the reigning Roman emperor and the current Roman governor. But does this evidence a Gentile reader—would not Jews also be interested in these dates?
5. Luke was a companion of Paul (book of Acts). Paul viewed his ministry as having a special focus on what group of people? **Gal 2:7-8; Rom 15:16** _____
6. Luke traces Jesus' genealogy back to whom? **Lk 3:38.** _____
By contrast, who did Matthew trace his genealogy back to? **Mt 1:1.** _____
7. Explanations of Jewish places and customs, e.g., **1:8-9; 2:4; 2:21-22; 2:23-24; 22:7.**

Whether the evidence is conclusive that Luke wrote for Gentile readers, one thing is clear — why he wrote it to Theophilus. **Lk 1:4.** What is the reason he wrote? _____

The gospel of Luke has been called the “cosmopolitan” gospel. “Cosmopolitan” is derived from the Greek *kosmos*, world, and *politEs*, citizen, and describes something relating to the world; not simply national or local. Unlike Matthew, for example, who wrote especially for the Jewish reader, a “cosmopolitan” gospel is for all people in all places and of all circumstances. Whether this epithet is fitting for Luke or not, Luke did include some unique material radiating that it is indeed “good news” for all and emphasizes the far-reaching sympathy and compassion of Christ. Consider the following ... [*Peculiar to Luke]

1. **Common man of humble occupation - Lk 2:8ff*** (announcement of Jesus' birth to shepherds; for all people)
2. **Poor - Lk 2:24* (Lev 12:6-8)** (purification offering); **21:1-4** (widow-two coins)
3. **Bottom of social ladder - Lk 16:19-31*** (Lazarus - poor, sores, “laid at gate,” crumbs, dogs)
4. **Social outcasts**
 - a. Sinners - **7:39,47*** (woman - a “sinner” vv37,39); **15:11-32*** (prodigal son); **23:39-42** (“criminal” on cross)
 - b. Tax gatherers - **5:27-32** (Levi/Matthew); **18:9-14*** (Pharisee and tax-collector's prayers)
 - c. Samaritans - **9:51-56*** (James and John-“consume them”; Jesus -“to save them”); **10:27f*** (good Samaritan)
 - d. Gentiles - **2:32*** (light to Gentiles); **Lk 4:24-28*** (woman of Sidon; Naaman); **7:9** (centurion in Caper.)
5. **Powerful - 7:2** (centurion); **8:41** (synagogue official - Jairus); **7:36*** (Phar.); **11:37*** (Phar.); **14:1*** (leader of Phar.)
6. **Rich - 18:18-27** (rich young ruler); **19:1-10*** (Zaccheus)

7. **Children** - **8:40-42...49-56** (12-year-old girl - Jairus' daughter); **18:15-17** (babies brought to Jesus)
 8. **Sick and handicapped** - **4:38f** (fever); **5:12f** (leprosy); **5:18** (paralyzed); **8:26f** (demon possessed - "crazy"); **11:14** (demon possessed - mute); **17:11f*** (leprosy); **18:35f** (blind)
 9. **Women** - "Gospel of womanhood"
 - a. Elizabeth, **1:24,25*** - special favor (enabled to conceive - John the Baptist)
 - b. Mary, **1:26-28, 46f*** - special honor (virgin, mother of Jesus)
 - c. Anna, **2:36*** - faithfulness
 - d. Widow who lost only son, **7:11-17*** - compassion
 - e. Sinful woman, **7:36f*** - recognized penitent heart, forgiveness
 - f. Joanna, Susanna, **8:3*** - monetary support of Jesus and his disciples
 - g. Mary, **10:42*** - spiritual priorities
 - h. Woman bent double, **13:10-13*** - healed
 - i. Women of Jerusalem who mourn for Jesus when He was on his way to be crucified, **Lk 23:27-28**
- >>>NOTE: All the above references in #9 are peculiar to Luke.
- j. Others - **18:1-8**, women used in parable used to illustrate perseverance in prayer; **23:49**, women at cross; **23:55**, women watched burial; **24:1f** women came to tomb on resurrection morning. (Note: last two events also mentioned in Mt & Mk)

IX. Data unique to each Gospel

By “unique,” we mean data found only in the one gospel cited. There is no parallel in another one of the Gospels.

Matthew

1:19-25; 2:1-23; 9:27-34; 11:20-30; 12:38-45; 13:24-30,36-53; 14:28-33; 17:24-27;
18:15-35; 20:1-16, 21:28-32; 25:1-46; 27:3-10,19,24-25,52-53,62-66; 28:11-20

Miracles unique to Matthew (three): 9:27-31; 9:32-33; 17:24-27.

Mark

1:1; 2:27; 3:20-21; 4:26-29; 6:6b; 7:3-4,32-37; 8:22-26; 9:29,48-49; 13:33-37; 14:51-52

Miracles unique to Mark (two): Mk 7:32-37; 8:22-26

Luke

1:1-80; 2:1-52; 3:19-20; 4:16-31; 5:1-11; 7:11-17; 7:36-8:3; 10:1-18:14; 19:1-27; 23:6-12

Miracles unique to Luke (six): 5:4-9; 7:11-17; 13:11-17; 14:1-6; 17:11-19; Lk 22:51

John

1:1-24, 35-51; 2:1-4:42; 4:46-5:47; 6:22-71; 7:11-11:54; 12:20-17:26; 20:26-31; 21:1-25

Miracles unique to John (six): 2:1-11; 4:46-54; 5:1-15; 9:1-41; 11:1-53; 21:1-14

Observations:

While both Matthew and Luke include genealogies, the nature of each is unique. How? (See lesson #5.) _____

Both Matthew and Luke record the virgin birth and how it came to be. However, there are differences that show the value of reading and learning *both* gospel accounts.

What does Matthew record that potentially could invalidate Jesus' birth occurring as divinely predetermined and negate its Divinely intended purpose?

1. **Mt 1:11-12** (How could what is stated in **Jer 22:24,30** *invalidate* Jesus being in the royal line to sit on David's throne? What does Matthew clearly record that shows this prophecy does *not* invalidate Jesus?) _____
2. **Mt 1:16,18-19** (What if Joseph *doesn't* take Mary as his wife? Remember the nature of Matthew's genealogy.) _____
3. **Mt 2:13,16,22?** (What was attempted and what if these efforts are successful?) _____

While Luke also discusses how the virgin birth came about, he also discusses other facets of it, and other events leading up to it, and following it.

1. **Lk 1:5-25** (What events does Luke record leading up the record of his birth?) _____
2. **Lk 1:26-38, 46-56** (Who does Luke focus on? What incredible thing is she told and how does she react?) _____

3. **Lk 2:8-20** (What marvelous event did he record and who had the Divine favor of seeing it? What did they do then?) _____

4. **Lk 2:22-24** (What does this data reveal about Joseph and Mary?) _____
5. **Lk 2:25-32** (What was revealed to this man? What remarkable thing did he say about this baby boy?) _____
6. **Lk 2:36-38** (Note the age and character of this woman. What did she do on this occasion and continue to do? _____
7. **Lk 2:41-52** (What event does Luke record? How was Jesus?) _____

Mark is the shortest gospel and there are very little sections that are unique in the sense that they relate events or discourses not mentioned in another Synoptic. The verses we have included in the list above are mainly in the category of added information relative to events or discourses found in another Gospel.

For example, while **Mt 13:1-53**, **Mk 4:1-34**, and **Lk 8:4-18** discuss Jesus teaching by parables, and contain parallel accounts of some of the same parables, Mark adds one not found in Matthew and Luke. **Read Mk 4:26-29 and note that it is not in Matthew or Luke's account.**

In addition to these, Mark often adds additional phrases that enhance the account.

For example, compare **Mt 4:1-2,11** and **Lk 4:1-2** with **Mk 1:13**. What phrase does Mark add?

Compare **Mt 12:9-14** and **Lk 6:6-11** with **Mk 3:5**. What phrase does Mark add? _____

So, though shorter, do not overlook comparing Mark when studying the Gospel accounts—he may add some unique information.

Note in the list of unique sections above that Luke has a rather extensive section that is unique to his account: **Lk 10:1-18:14**. In this section are some of the most well known events and discourses.

For example, what the following sections are about?

- **Lk 10:25-37** _____
- **Lk 12:13-21** _____
- **Lk 15:11-32** _____
- **Lk 16:19-31** _____
- **Lk 18:9-14** _____

This highlights the value of studying not just one Gospel, but all of them. John also has quite a bit of unique data, e.g. **Jn 12:20-17:26**. Of this section, **Jn 13:1-17:26** records events and discussion of one evening. A following lesson will compare John and the Synoptics.

Remember these things we are observing when you see harmonies of the Gospels men prepare. The “harmonized” sections may refer to the same event or discourse overall, yet contain unique information and focus.

X. Using the Synoptics to interpret one another

Two basic rules of interpretation involve context and harmony. In addition to studying the context of a particular passage in the Synoptics, if that discourse, topic, or event is recorded in another Synoptic, comparing and harmonizing them can be a valuable tool in interpretation. Following are some examples.

Mt 3:11-12; Lk 3:16-17 - John said Jesus would baptize “with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

Compare **Mk 1:8** - What part of this phrase does Mark leave out? _____

Now compare the three accounts - what group of people is mentioned by Matthew and Luke but not by Mark? **Mt 3:1-10; Lk 3:1-9; Mk 1:2-7** _____

Mt 10:2-4 and **Mk 3:16-19** both record that Thaddaeus was one of the chosen apostles. But, Luke (**6:12-16**) does not mention Thaddeus, but lists another name among the apostles that neither Matthew nor Mark lists. Was there an additional apostle not recorded in Matthew and Luke? No, for *all three* Synoptics say Jesus chose *twelve*.

Harmonizing the Synoptics, what is the answer to this seeming dilemma? (See also **Ac 1:13** - Luke wrote Acts.) _____

In **Mt 10:34-36** - what does Jesus mean by “sword”? Compare **Lk 12:51-53**. _____

What does the context of both passages indicate about who this would affect? _____

Read Mt 11:12-13 - Since men were seeking to “take it [the kingdom] by force” from the time of John the Baptist, and “the prophets and the Law prophesied until John,” the question arises: did the prophesied kingdom *begin with John the Baptist*? Other Scriptures clearly indicate Jesus did not begin His reign as our mediatorial king until after he died and rose again and ascended back to the Father: **Mk 9:1...Ac 1:8; Lk 24:26, 45-47; Ac 2:30-36**.

Compare **Lk 16:16**. Here also we have, similar to Matthew, the statement that “the Law and prophets *were* until John.” NKJV, ASV (NAS95, “*were proclaimed* until John”). Clearly, John the Baptist is being used as a time stamp—*something* changed with John. The following contrasting statement in Luke shows *what* changed—what this time stamp marked. What was it? (*not* the *establishment* of the kingdom and *not* that the Law and prophets were no longer preached) “since that time _____ and everyone is forcing his way into it.” (Compare the last phrase with the statement in Matthew, “men take it by force.”) John the Baptist’s ministry was to declare “the kingdom of God is at hand” and prepare the way for the Messianic King, **Mt 3:1-3; Lk 1:17; 3:3-6**.

Mt 13, Mk 4, and Lk 8 record the parable of the sower.

Matthew and Mark record that the seed bore fruit when it fell on “good soil.” Luke explains clearly what “good soil” is, **Lk 8:15**. What is it? _____

Matthew mentions two things as illustrative of “thorns” that choke the word; Mark and Luke mention three. Compare Mark and Luke on the third one. According to Mark, what causes people to “become unfruitful”? _____

Matthew records (**Mt 14:3-4**) that John the Baptist told Herod “It is not lawful for you to have” Herodias. Was he simply living with her but not married? Were they married, even though it was “unlawful”? Compare Mark’s account (**Mk 6:17-18**)—what does he say the relationship was?

Mt 19:9 sets forth God’s law relative to a man divorcing his wife and marrying another woman. Comparing **Mk 10:10-12**, is this only applicable to a man divorcing his wife? Explain. _____

Read Mt 24:1-3. The disciples asked two questions: 1) “When will these things happen?” 2) “What will be the sign of Your coming, and the end of the age?” Were these questions about two different events (the destruction of Jerusalem; the end of the world), or two questions about one event (the destruction of Jerusalem)? If **Mk 13:4** and **Lk 21:7** (note “these things” in *both* questions) interpret Matthew, what is the answer? _____

In **Mk 3:29** Jesus says men with the impenitent and rebellious attitude and conduct of these men are “guilty of an eternal sin.” Compare **Mt 12:32**—what phrase parallels the one used in Mark?

Lk 9:29 says that when Jesus was “transfigured” (**Mt 17:2; Mk 9:2**) that “the appearance of his face became different.” Gloomy? Angry? Startled? Fear? If we let **Mt 17:2** interpret, how was it “different”? _____

These are but examples that highlight the value of comparing the synoptics in our pursuit of understanding. Do not overlook this rich source in your study!

XI. Expanding our knowledge of Christ by comparing the Synoptics

Three men report on a house. One, a general contractor, discussing it with fellow builders, mentions that it is a two-story house, with a brick facade on the front and HardiPlank on the sides and back, with hardwood floors and sheetrock walls. The second, a salesman endeavoring to interest potential buyers, may mention the same things, but adds that it is beside a beautiful lake, in a good school district, and convenient to a nearby thoroughfare. The third, a tax collector, well aware of what the other two have seen, focuses on the fact that it is new construction in a new subdivision, within the city limits, and subject to the corresponding tax rate for that area. Same house? Yes. Truthful witnesses? Yes. But, if we want a more complete idea of the house, we must compare all three.

So it is with Christ. By comparing the gospels, we can expand our knowledge of an event or discourse recorded in the particular gospel we are reading. While this has been seen in the lessons studied thus far, following are some additional examples that highlight this value in comparing the Synoptics.

After Jesus' baptism and temptations, all three Synoptics begin recording events and discourses in the Galilean phase of his ministry that occupied over a year (**Jn 4:35,43...6:4**) often called "The great Galilean ministry." **Mt 4:12; Mk 1:14-15; Lk 4:14-15**

Mt 4:13 simply says, "and leaving Nazareth." What do we learn about why he left Nazareth by comparing **Lk 4:16-30**? _____

Also, what do we learn about his view of his relationship to the OT? _____

All three Synoptics record Jesus telling the disciples he would make them "fishers of men," **Mt 4:19; Mk 1:17; Lk 5:10**. Luke adds some information about an event that should give them confidence in His ability to fulfill that prophecy. What is it? **Lk 5:1-11** _____

Whether **Lk 6:17-49** is the same sermon as the one recorded in **Matthew chapters 5-7** or a different one, Matthew's record provides a more expansive treatment of these topics than does Luke and records some others Jesus discussed. Yet, Luke adds some interesting data as well that helps us to understand our Lord. For example ...

How many "Blessed"s in Matthew? **Mt 5:1-12** ____ How many in Luke? **Lk 6:17-26** _____

How many "woes" in Luke? ____ How many in Matthew? _____

Compare Matthew's six verses on loving your neighbor (**Mt 5:43-48**) with Luke's ten (**Lk 6:27-36**).

Mark (**Mk 6:7-13**) and Luke (**Lk 9:1-6**) record Jesus instructing and sending the apostles on the limited commission. Matthew includes that mission (**Mt 10:1,5-15**), but he expands to include Jesus' preparing them for their work after Pentecost that would involve threats, scourging, imprisonment, betrayal, fear of death, and division of families (**10:16-42**). His warnings to them give insight into our Lord's view of commitment to Him and the gospel. What did he tell them that would give them incentive to duty in the face of such difficulty?

10:22-23 _____

10:24-25 _____

10:28 _____

10:29-32 _____

10:32-33 _____

10:34-36 _____

10:37-39 _____

Matthew (15:1-20) and **Mark (7:1-23)** record the event where Jesus is challenged by the religious leaders for not teaching his disciples to observe the tradition of washing hands when they eat. But Matthew adds some information that gives us further insight as to how our Lord reacts when hypocritical religious teachers exalting the precepts of men over the commands of God are offended by his reproof. What was his reaction **Mt 15:12-14**? _____

Mark (16:14-18) and **Luke (24:36-43)** record the appearance of Jesus to his apostles on Sunday evening of the day he was raised (**John** also, **20:19-25**). Comparing Mark and Luke ...

What do we learn from Mark about how Jesus viewed the apostles' refusal to believe credible eyewitness testimony? _____

What do we learn from Luke about how Jesus went about persuading these incredulous men to believe? _____

These are but samples of how comparing the Synoptics can expand our knowledge of Christ, how he thinks, what he approves of or disapproves of, how he acts, etc. We should not fail to use the tools at your disposal to compare the Synoptics when studying if we want to gain a more complete picture of our Savior and Lord.

XII. Jesus' Birth and Early Years - Matthew and Luke

Compare **Lk 1:26-56; 2:1-52** and **Mt 1:18-25; 2:1-23**. This is an example of how comparing the Synoptics can expand our knowledge of Christ (previous lesson).

(Mark does not discuss Jesus' birth and early years.)

What phrase in **Mt 1:18** is more fully explained in **Lk 1:26-56**? _____

Note that we would not know how what Matthew describes came about without Luke's account. This is another example of how the Synoptics complement one another.

As **Mt 1:18-19** indicates, a young unmarried, but engaged, woman becoming pregnant can present some serious problems. Adding to the drama is where she lived, **Lk 1:26** - note what Nathanael said about this city, **Jn 1:46**. According to **Lk 1:38,46-55**, how did Mary respond to this situation? _____

By comparing the Synoptics, this gives us insight into the character of this remarkable young woman.

According to **Lk 1:35**, who did this unique event, never heard of before or after in the annals of world history, mark her son to be? _____

Matthew selected a prophecy to point the reader to who this child to be born in this remarkable way was, **Mt 1:22-23**. How does this prophecy describe him? _____

Together, Matthew and Luke prepare the reader for the fact that the documents they are going to write are "good news" based on a person unlike any other, even from the time of his birth, and worthy of the most careful attention of every human being, whether Jew or Gentile.

While Matthew records that Joseph was told to "take Mary as your wife" and that he did so (**Mt 1:20,24**), what does Luke say their relationship was even after that, **Lk 2:5**? _____

This serves to avoid concluding Matthew's statement meant they were married. This is a good example of the Synoptics interpreting one another.

According to **Mt 2:1f**, why did Herod want to kill Jesus? (Note who Herod is, **v1**. Compare **Lk 1:32** with Matthew's genealogy, **1:1**.) _____

Others before and after have this boy held this and similar titles. But, **Lk 1:32-35, 68-77** expands on the role this boy being born would fulfill, and shows why he was different than any before him or after him.

Luke records early days following Jesus' birth and the confirming testimony of a prophet and prophetess as to his unique purpose in God's plan, **Lk 2:21-38**. Matthew records that Joseph took Jesus to Egypt to flee Herod but then returned to Nazareth to live, **Mt 2:16-23**. Luke records the only event from that early time in his life until he began his ministry at 30 years of age, **Lk 2:39-52**. How old was Jesus when this occurred? _____

XIII. The Synoptics compared with John

It is valuable to be aware that John includes material that is not found in the Synoptics. Because of its striking difference in material and layout, John is not included in what we call the Synoptics.

That Christ’s earthly ministry lasted a little over three years is based on the feasts in John. Beside each reference cited in #3-6 below, write how John identifies the feast.

1. 40 days (baptism, temptations) - **Mk 1:13** _____
2. Several “day”s - **Jn 1:29,35,43; 2:1,12** _____
3. **2:13,23** _____
4. **5:1** _____
5. **6:4** _____
6. **12:1; 13:1** _____
7. 40 days - **Ac 1:3** _____

Suggestion: mark these in some way in your Bible. For example, #1, #2, etc. You may find it helpful to chain them one to the other or make a list of them in your Bible. They can serve as anchor points for getting some grasp on the timeline of events recorded in Jesus’ ministry, not only in John, but in the Synoptics.

For example, here is a *general* overview of how the Synoptics fit into the time structure of these feasts ...

Previous to the *first* feast of **Jn 2:13**

Mt 3:1-4:11; Mk 1:1-13; Lk 3:1-4:13

From the *first* feast to the *second* feast of **Jn 5:1** (1st full year)

Mt 4:12-9:9; Mk 1:14-2:14; Lk 4:14-5:28

From the *second* feast to the *third* feast of **Jn 6:4** (2nd full year)

Mt 9:10-14:36; Mk 2:15-6:56; Lk 5:29-9:17

From the *third* feast to the *fourth* feast of **Jn 12:1; 13:1**

Mt 15:1-20:34; Mk 7:1-10:52; Lk 9:18-19:28

At the *time of and following* the *fourth* feast

Mt 21:1-28:20; Mk 11:1-16:20; Lk 19:29-24:53

John only records events of about 20 days of Jesus’ earthly ministry. Chapters 13-17, approximately one-fourth of the book, record events of but one evening.

No parables in John.

Nine miracles in John (Matthew - 19; Mark - 18; Luke - 20). All but three (feeding the 5000, **6:4-14**, and walking on the water, **6:16-21**, his resurrection, **20:1-29**) are unique to John. What are these six miracles unique to John?

- **2:1-11** _____
- **4:46-54** _____

- 5:1-15 _____
- 9:1-41 _____
- 11:1-53 _____
- 21:1-14 _____

What did John say was his purpose of recording these miracles? **Jn 20:30-31** _____

Not covered by the Synoptics ...

Jn 1:1-18 - His eternal existence and purpose in coming to earth

Jn 1:19-24 - John's first testimony to Jesus (**1:19-36**)

Jn 1:35-51 - Jesus' first disciples (**1:37...41-42...43...49**)

Jn 2:1-12 - Jesus' first miracle (**2:1...11**)

Jn 2:13-3:36 - The early Judean ministry (**2:13...3:22**)

Jn 4:1-42 - Journey through Samaria (**4:4...52**)

Jn 4:46-52 - Second miracle at Cana (**4:46...54**)

Jn 5:1-47 - Lame man healed on the Sabbath in Jerusalem and consequent discourse

Jn 6:22-71 - Discourse to multitudes on being the bread of life

Jn 7:1-9 - Jesus' brothers' advice out of unbelief

Jn 7:10-10:21 - at Feast of Tabernacles (**7:2,8,10,37**)

- debate, discourses, divided opinions (**7:11-8:59**)
- healing of the blind man (**9:1-41**)
- the good shepherd (**10:1-21**)

Jn 10:22-39 - debate and discourse at Feast of Dedication (**10:22**)

Jn 10:40-42 - ministry in Perea beyond the Jordan

Jn 11:1-53 - raising of Lazarus from the dead at Bethany

Jn 11:54 - withdrawal to Ephraim

Jn 12:20-50 - at the Feast of Passover (**12:1,20**)

Greeks seek Jesus; He foretells his death; unbelief of the Jews

Jn 13:1-16:33 - on night of his betrayal with his apostles discusses their mission

Jn 17:1-26 - Jesus' prayer regarding his mission, the apostles, and those who would believe on him through their work

Jn 21:1-25 - appearance to the apostles beside the Sea of Galilee; final remarks about this gospel

XIV. Institution of the Lord’s Supper

(John does not record the institution of the Lord’s Supper.)

Compare **Mt 26:26-29**, **Mk 14:22-25** with **Lk 22:14-20**.

What is different about **Lk 22:17-18...20** from both Matthew and Mark? _____

Two possibilities (we will discuss in class):

1. The “cup” of **v17** is a cup of the Passover
2. In **v17** He told them to take it and “share” (divide) it, but did not tell them to drink it

Whichever is the case, this highlights the value of comparing the Synoptics.

In this case, we have a fourth witness: **1Co 11:23-26**. **Read and compare it.**

What is added by Luke in **Lk 22:19** that is not found in Matthew and Mark? _____

Compare Paul’s account in **1Co 11:23-26**. Relative to this phrase, is Paul’s account exactly like Matthew, Mark, Luke, or neither? If different, how? _____

And this is what we find the early churches doing, **Ac 2:42; 20:7; 1Co 11:20f**.

According to Luke’s account (**v19**), Jesus said “do this” in his memory. Do what? What is the parallel phrase in Matthew’s account? _____

Note: Some think “do this” refers to “breaking” the bread because he “broke” the bread. There are five verb phrases in **Lk 22:19**. What are they?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

If “do this” means we must do what he did, how many of the five must we do? _____

Comparing the fourth witness, **1Co 11:23-26**, what does “do this” refer to (see **v26**)? _____

We see how comparing the Synoptics and using the law of harmony to compare other pertinent Scriptures can help us to correctly interpret the Scriptures.

XV. “Synoptic Problem”

You will not read about the “Synoptic Problem” in the Bible. It is a “problem” created in the minds of critics and commentators. Is based on *assumptions* (e.g., since Matthew and Luke are alike in some texts, they must have copied from a common source) and refer to *non-existent* documents (e.g. “Q,” or “Logia”; “UrMark”) as that source. There are a number of different theories that have been proposed through the years to solve the “problem”—and that’s what they are: *theories*. They are unproven, and even some who advocated them have abandoned them. They conflict with one another, and the “scholars” argue the fallacy of the other “scholars” theories.

We will not spend much time on this in class. I am including information about it here so that if you run across it you can be familiar with it and be aware that it is nothing that in any should threaten your faith in the credibility of the Synoptics.

Some thoughts...

Why are the Synoptics *similar*?

1. All three are dealing with the same facts.
2. All three recorded accurately, whether it was what they knew personally as eye-witnesses or derived from other sources.
3. All three were guided by the Holy Spirit in compiling their accounts.

Why are the Synoptics *different*?

1. They were different men, and different men relate the same incidents in different ways based on their personal character, training, and purpose. Matthew was a tax-collector and wrote for Jews, Luke was a physician and wrote for a more general audience, and Mark wrote in different style than both, possibly out of his own makeup, or in view of the audience he was targeting. The Holy Spirit “moved” (influenced) men to write the New Testament, but not as robots. Their personality, culture, unique way of expressing themselves, training, was allowed to be used in composing their writings.
2. Different reporters (whether eye-witnesses, or secondary witnesses) will chose to relate different aspects of an event or speech. This is evident in secular histories and in modern reporting.
3. Jesus would speak on similar topics at different times but use different words and illustrations. Each writer may chose to record one or the other and in different brevity or fullness.
4. The fact of their differences show they were not in collusion nor derived all their material from a common source that they copied.

Following are some quotes from various sources that further elaborate on the “problem” and its theoretical “solutions.” These are but a small sampling of what can be found. They are sufficient to show the “problem” with the “Synoptic Problem” is it not a problem at all! Read further if you are interested; otherwise, skip this section. Note: If you have availability to R. C. Foster’s *Studies in the Life of Christ*, he has some excellent information on this topic.

The “Two-source Theory” - “Two main lines of descent are indicated by the lines drawn: the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost descends into Ur-Mark and then

into the Gospel of Mark. *Ur* is the German word for “early,” and by the name *Ur-Mark* is meant an earlier, shorter document than the Gospel of Mark which we possess. It is held that this earlier document grew by accretions into the Gospel of Mark as we have it today. Another line of descent is from the eyewitnesses who bore testimony to the things which they knew concerning the deeds and words of Jesus. This line proceeds through “brief gospels” into the Gospel of Luke. Preceding in time the formation of *Ur-Mark* and beginning another line of descent is ‘Q.’ ‘Q’ is the name given another document which they assume. ‘Q’ ... comes from a German word, “*Quelle*,” which means source, the first letter being used to designate the document. It is also called ‘Logia’ (“words” or “sayings”) because of the supposition that it contained mainly words of Jesus.” ...

“The customary statement of the case for the Two-source Theory is that it is proved by the similarities and the differences in the synoptic accounts. In other words, in the passages where Matthew, Mark, and Luke are parallel, the accounts are so closely identical that they must have risen from some interdependent relation; in the passages where they are entirely different, there are adequate reasons for any omissions or changes by the person who copied, and omitted and changed as he copied.” FSLC, p63f.

Henry Theissen points out this “Two-Document” theory “has fallen into disrepute” and that “all the evidence” militates against it. INTth, pp107-108. The supposed second source is another non-existent document labeled “Q.” There is no objective evidence of the very existence of this assumed “Q” document, and Theissen points out that the theory that our present gospels evolved from these two non-existent documents is “in the absence of any external proofs” and rests on “merely the inference of the writers.” *Ibid*, pp110-111.

“It is commonly held that Matthew drew much of his matter from an earlier compilation of Jesus' sayings used also by Luke and nowadays sometimes dubbed "Q". But of such a book no ancient writer seems ever to have heard, and the grounds on which its existence is inferred by modern scholars are far less secure than is commonly represented or supposed.” Ropes, RSG, p37

“The hypothesis is usually accepted that there was in existence at the close of the first century a book containing an extensive record of Jesus' sayings, from which both Matthew and Luke drew, but which, having been largely reproduced in their gospels, was thereafter lost. This supposed book was often termed the "Logia" by scholars of the last century. In the present generation it is more commonly known by the symbol ‘Q.’” James Hardy Ropes, *The Synoptic Gospels* (First Published 1934; Second Impression with New Preface, London: Oxford University Press, 1960) <<http://markgoodacre.org/Q/quotat.htm>> Mr. Ropes was once a professor in Harvard Divinity School and favored the existence of “Q.” However, though remaining a modernist, he turned away from “Q” as seen in the quotes above. Here is another example from Ropes: “...ought to be repeated that ‘Q,’ if it ever existed, is a pure inference, a strictly hypothetical document. No ancient writer known to us appears to have so much as heard of it, to say nothing of knowing it by personal inspection.”

“Hence, the Synoptic Problem is this: how shall we account for such remarkable unity amid such striking diversity? A complete solution has not been found. In fact, every attempt at a solution gives rise to several new problems and difficulties...” HSB, p376.

“...they [the Synoptics, srf] contain marked resemblances along with equally marked differences. This is true not only of the subject-matter and the vocabulary, but also of the order in which the materials are introduced.” INTth, p. 101. Because Matthew and Luke, for example, have much common material and some of it almost identical (e.g., Mt 3:7-10 and Lk 3:7-9), it is assumed they both must have drawn from a common source, thus the *theory* of a *non-existent* source labeled “Q.” In discussing the Logia (or “Q”)—a *non-existent* but assumed collection of sayings (how many and what they consisted of is not known) written by Matthew in Aramaic or Hebrew—and its use by Matthew and Luke in composing their gospels, Hendriksen says, “All this is merely a theory.” *Ibid.* In discussing the similarities and differences between Matthew and Mark, Hendriksen mentions a “well-known theory” dealing with this, then says, “Not only liberal but conservative authors have seen its inadequacy.” *Ibid.* Other assumptions have been advanced, but “Objections have been advanced against both of these assumptions.” *Ibid.* Hendriksen observes that the supposed literary connection between Matthew and Mark “has not been solved”—maybe the assumed connection exists only in the minds of commentators!

Theissen discusses the “Urevangelium Theory” (“Ur” is the German word for “early”) based on a “theory” that “there was an original Gospel from which all three Synoptic writers drew their materials,” then says that this theory “has no historical support and is improbable to a high degree.” INTth, p103. Of the “Interdependence Theory,” that the gospel authors depended on one another, one using the other’s gospel, he notes that those who have advocated this cannot agree on who borrowed from whom! Theissen says “this theory is not now held by any important scholar.” *Ibid.*, p104.

XVI. Review

1. What are Matthew, Mark, and Luke called the “Synoptic” Gospels?
2. What does “gospel” mean, especially as it relates to the content of these three documents?
3. How old was Jesus when He began His earthly ministry? Approximately, how long was His earthly ministry? Therefore, from Jesus’ birth to His resurrection, approximately how many years do the Synoptics cover? What are the approximate dates for this time period (BC ... AD)?
4. When were the Synoptics written? Choose the correct answer. (a) within 40 years of the events recorded (b) about 400 years after the events recorded (c) 100-200 years after the events recorded
5. Where does Matthew begin his record?
6. Where does Luke begin his account?
7. Where does Mark begin his gospel?
8. Of the three synoptic writers, which one was a Gentile?
9. Which of the synoptic writers clearly wrote with Jewish readers in view?
10. Which of the Synoptics possibly evidence a focus on the Roman reader?
11. What was the common purpose of the Synoptics?
12. Where did the writers get what they wrote?
13. What is the difference in Matthew and Luke’s genealogy?
14. List at least two benefits in comparing the Synoptics when studying.
15. Which Synoptic explains how Jesus could be born of a virgin and what his mother’s reaction was to this news?
16. Which Synoptic records the real threat on Jesus’ life as a baby and why that attempt to kill him was made?
17. Which is the only Synoptic to record anything about Jesus’ boyhood after he was about one to two years old? What event is that?
18. Why is the Gospel of John not included in the “Synoptic Gospels”?
19. Although John was not one of the Synoptics, how does it provide a time frame for the period of Christ’s ministry covered in the Synoptics?
20. What is the “synoptic problem”? Is it a true, or imagined problem?