

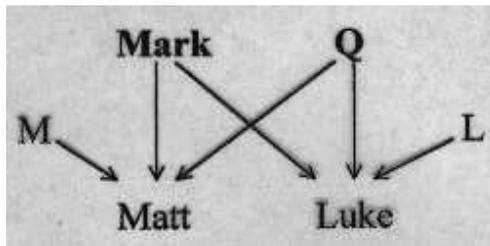
The Synoptic Gospels

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The "Synoptic Gospels" - The Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke are so similar to each other that, in a sense, they view Jesus "with the same eye" (*syn-optic*), in contrast to the very different picture of Jesus presented in the Fourth Gospel (John). Yet there are also many significant differences among the three Synoptic Gospels.

The "Synoptic Problem" - The similarities between Matthew, Mark, and Luke are so numerous and so close, not just in the order of the material presented but also in the exact wording of long stretches of text, that it is not sufficient to explain these similarities on the basis of common *oral tradition* alone. Rather, some type of *literary dependence* must be assumed as well. That is, someone copied from someone else's previously written text; several of the evangelists must have used one or more of the earlier Gospels as sources for their own compositions. The situation is complicated because some of the material is common to all three Synoptics, while other material is found in only two out of these three Gospels.. Moreover, the common material is not always presented in the same order in the various Gospels. So, the question remains, who wrote first, and who copied from whom?

The Four-Source Theory (the solution accepted by most scholars today)



Mark = the oldest written Gospel, which provided the *narrative framework* for both *Matt* and *Luke*

Q = "Quelle" = a hypothetical written "Source" of some *sayings / teachings* of Jesus (now lost?). By definition **Q** consists of materials found in *Matthew* and *Luke* and not in *Mark*

M = various other materials (mostly oral, some maybe written) found *only in Matthew*

L = various other materials (mostly oral, others probably written) found *only in Luke*

Note: the arrows indicate direction of influence; older materials are above, later Gospels below

Markan Priority - For most of Christian history, people thought that Matthew was the first and oldest Gospel, and that Mark was a later, shorter version of the same basic message. From the mid-19th century until today, however, most scholars are convinced that Mark is the first and oldest Gospel (at least in the final version, as we have it today), and that Matthew and Luke are later expansions of Mark. Why?

1. Mark's Gospel contains several grammatical, literary, historical, and geographical difficulties (minor errors) that are not found in Matthew and/or Luke. If Matthew was first, it is harder to understand how Mark could have introduced these errors; but if Mark was first, it is easy to see how Matthew and/or Luke wanted to and were able to correct Mark's minor mistakes.
2. Mark's Gospel contains several episodes that are obscure (4:26-29; 14:51-52) or make Jesus look crazy (3:19-21), magical (7:32-37), or weak (8:22-26). If Matthew was first, it

is harder to explain why Mark added these strange episodes; but if Mark was first, it is easy to understand why both Matthew and Luke omitted them.

3. Mark's basic chronological/geographical structure is the same as in the other two Synoptics; but the material found in both Matthew and Luke (but not in Mark) is in very different orders in these two Gospels. If Matthew was first and Mark second, it is hard to understand why Luke would have kept the same order for all the material found in both Matthew and Mark, but substantially rearranged all the other material found in Matthew but not in Mark. If Mark was first, however, then it is easy to explain how Matthew and Luke inserted the extra material they have in common (from the Q source?) into Mark's overall outline, although in significantly different ways.

Unique Materials

The Gospel according to Mark – material found only in Mark:

- 1:1 - Introductory Verse
- 3:19b-21 - Jesus' Family Tries to Restrain Him
- 4:26-29 - The Parable of the Seed Growing of Itself
- 7:31-37 - Jesus Heals a Deaf Man in the Decapolis
- 8:22-26 - Jesus Gives Sight to the Blind Man of Bethsaida
- 14:51-52 - A Young Man Runs Away Naked after Jesus' Arrest
- [16:14-18] - [The Commissioning of the Eleven]

The Gospel according to Matthew - material found only in Matthew:

- 1:1 - Introductory Verse
- 1:18-2:23 - The Infancy Narrative (incl. Dreams of Joseph, Birth of Jesus, Visit of the Magi, Flight into Egypt, Massacre of the Infants of Bethlehem, Return from Egypt)
- 5:17-20, 21-24, 27-29, 31, 33-38, 43 - Jesus Teaches about the Law, Anger, Adultery, and Oaths
- 6:1-8, 16-19 - Teaching about Almsgiving and about Fasting
- 7:6, 15-17 - Sayings about Pearls before Swine, and False Prophets
- 7:28-29 - Conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount
- 9:27-31 - The Healing of the Two Blind Men (cf. 20:29-34)
- 9:35-38 - A Summary of the Compassion of Jesus
- 10:22-23 - Part of Jesus' Teaching about Upcoming Persecutions
- 11:1 - Narrator's Conclusion to Jesus' Missionary Discourse
- 11:28-30 - The Gentle Mastery of Christ
- 13:24-30 - The Parable of the Weeds among the Wheat
- 13:36-43 - The Explanation of the Parable of the Weeds
- 13:44-52 - Three More Parables and a Concluding Dialogue
- 14:28-31 - Peter Attempts to Walk on Water
- 16:17-19 - Jesus' Response to Peter's Confession
- 17:24-27 - Dialogue about Payment of the Temple Tax
- 18:15-20, 21-35 - A Brother Who Sins, and The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant
- 19:10-12 - The Disciples React to Jesus' Teaching on Divorce
- 20:1-16 - The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard

- 21:28-32 - The Parable of the Two Sons
- Almost all of Ch. 23 - Prohibition of Titles, Woes to the Scribes and Pharisees
- 25:1-13 - The Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids
- 25:31-46 - The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats
- 27:3-10 - The Death of Judas
- 27:24-25 - Pilate Washes His Hands
- 27:52-53 - Resuscitation of the Saints
- 27:62-66 - The Guard Posted at the Tomb
- 28:11-15 - The Report of the Guard
- 28:16-20 - The Commissioning of the Disciples

Material in other Gospels but significantly different in Matthew:

- 1:2-17 - The Genealogy of Jesus
- Most of Ch. 5-7 - The Sermon on the Mount (esp. 5:3-12; 6:9-15; 7:15-20)
- Most of Ch. 10 - The Missionary Discourse
- 12:33-37 - The Tree and Its Fruit
- 16:13-23 - Peter's Confession about Jesus
- Much of Ch. 18 - The Community Discourse
- 22:1-14 - The Parable of the Wedding Feast
- 25:14-30 - The Parable of the Talents

The Gospel according to Luke – material found only in Luke:

- 1:1-4 - The Literary Prologue (Dedication to Theophilus)
- 1:5 – 2:52 - The Infancy Narrative (incl. Announcement of John's Birth, Announcement of Jesus' Birth, Mary Visits Elizabeth, Canticle of Mary, Birth of John, Canticle of Zechariah, Birth of Jesus, Visit of the Shepherds, Circumcision and Naming of Jesus, Presentation at the Temple, Return to Nazareth, and Boy Jesus in the Temple)
- 3:10-14 - John the Baptist Replies to Questioners
- 4:14-30 - Jesus Preaches and is Rejected at Nazareth
- 5:1-11 - The Call of Simon the Fisherman
- 6:24-26 - Four "Woes" added after the Beatitudes
- 7:11-17 - The Raising of the Widow's Son at Nain
- 8:1-3 - Galilean Women Follow Jesus
- Much of 9:51 – 18:14 - Jesus and His Disciples Journey to Jerusalem (incl. Rejection by Samaritan Villagers, Mission of the Seventy, Parable of the Good Samaritan, Martha and Mary, Parable of a Friend at Midnight, Warning against Avarice, Parable of the Rich Fool, Parable of the Barren Fig Tree, Healing a Crippled Woman, Healing a Man with Dropsy, Teachings for Guests and Hosts, Cost of Discipleship, Parable of the Lost Coin, Parable of the Lost/Prodigal Son, Parable of the Unjust Steward, Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, Unprofitable Servants, Cleansing of Ten Lepers, Parable of the Widow and Judge; Prayers of the Pharisee and Publican)
- 19:1-11 - Zacchaeus the Tax Collector
- 19:39-44 - Jesus Laments over Jerusalem
- 22:15-17, 31-32, 35-38 - Some of Jesus' Words at the Last Supper
- 23:2-16 - Jesus Appearances before Pilate and before Herod
- 23:27-31 - On the Way to the Cross, Jesus Speaks to some Weeping Women
- 23:34, 39-43, 46 - The Repentant Thief, and some Details of the Crucifixion
- 24:13-35, 36-49 - Jesus Appears to Disciples on the Road to Emmaus, and in Jerusalem

- 24:50-53 - The Ascension of Jesus

Material in other Gospels but significantly different in Luke:

- 3:1-2 - The Preaching of John the Baptist
- 3:23-38 - The Genealogy of Jesus
- 6:20-26 - The Beatitudes (at the beginning of the Sermon on the Plain)
- 7:36-50 - The Pardon of the Sinful Woman
- 9:18-22 - Peter's Confession about Jesus
- 11:1-8 - The Lord's Prayer and Further Teachings on Prayer
- 14:16-24 - The Parable of the Great Feast
- 19:12-27 - The Parable of the Ten Gold Coins
- 21:34-38 - The Exhortation to be Vigilant
- 22:15-38 - Jesus' Discourses at the Last Supper (incl. The Betrayal Foretold, The Role of the Disciples, Peter's Denial Foretold, and Instructions for the Time of Crisis)
- 24:1-12 - The Empty Tomb Story

The "Q" Source (seemingly used by both Matthew and Luke)

Luke 3:7-9, 16-17	Matt 3:7b-12	Preaching of John the Baptist
Luke 4:1-13a	Matt 4:1-11a	Temptation of Jesus
Luke 6:20b-23	Matt 5:3, 6, 4, 11-12	Beatitudes
Luke 6:27-33, 35b-36	Matt 5:44, 39b-40, 42; 7:12; 5:46-47, 45, 48	Love of Enemies
Luke 6:37a, 38c, 39-42	Matt 7:1-2; 15:14; 10:24-25a; 7:3-5	On Judging Others
Luke 6:43-45	Matt 7:16-20 & 12:33-35	On Bearing Fruit
Luke 6:46-49	Matt 7:21, 24-27	House Built on Rock
Luke 7:1-2, 6b-10	Matt 8:5-10, 13	Healing a Centurion's Servant
Luke 7:18-23	Matt 11:2-6	John the Baptist's Questions
Luke 7:24-28, 31-35	Matt 11:7-11, 16-19	Jesus Speaks about John
Luke 9:57-60	Matt 8:19-22	On Following Jesus
Luke 10:2-12	Matt 9:37-38; 10:7-16	Mission of the Seventy
Luke 10:13-16	Matt 11:21-23; 10:40	Woes against Galilean Cities
Luke 10:21-24	Matt 11:25-27; 13:16-17	Thanksgiving to the Father
Luke 11:2-4	Matt 6:9-13	Lord's Prayer
Luke 11:9-13	Matt 7:7-11	Asking and Receiving
Luke 11:14-15, 17-23	Matt 12:22-30	Beelzebul Controversy
Luke 11:24-26	Matt 12:43-45	Return of the Evil Spirit
Luke 11:29-32	Matt 12:38-42	Sign of Jonah
Luke 11:33-35	Matt 5:15; 6:22-23	On Light and Seeing
Luke 11:39-44, 46-52	Matt 23:25-26, 23, 6-7a, 27, 4, 29-31, 34-36, 13	Woes against Pharisees
Luke 12:2-9	Matt 10:26-33; 12:32	Fearing Humans and God
Luke 12:10-12	Matt 12:32; 10:19	Role of the Holy Spirit
Luke 12:22-31, 33-34	Matt 6:25-33, 19-21	Anxiety; Treasure in Heaven
Luke 12:39-40, 42-46	Matt 24:43-51	Watch and Be Ready
Luke 12:51-53	Matt 10:34-36	Divisions in Families
Luke 12:54-56	Matt 16:2-3	Signs of the Times

Luke 12:58-59	Matt 5:25-26	Settling out of Court
Luke 13:18-21	Matt 13:31-33	Mustard Seed and Leaven
Luke 12:23-30	Matt 7:13-14, 22-23; 8:11-12; 20:16	Exclusion from the Kingdom
Luke 13:34-35	Matt 23:37-39	Lament over Jerusalem
Luke 14:16-24	Matt 22:1-10	Parable of the Banquet
Luke 14:26-27	Matt 10:37-38	Carrying the Cross
Luke 14:34-35	Matt 5:13	Parable of Salt
Luke 15:4-7	Matt 18:12-14	Parable of the Lost Sheep
Luke 16:13	Matt 6:24	On Serving Two Masters
Luke 16:16-18	Matt 11:12-13; 5:18, 32	On the Law and Divorce
Luke 17:1, 3b-4	Matt 18:7, 15, 21-22	On Sin and Forgiveness
Luke 17:6	Matt 17:20	Faith Like a Mustard Seed
Luke 17:23-24, 26-27, 30, 33-35, 37	Matt 24:26-27, 37-39; 10:39; 24:40-41, 28	Coming of the Son of Man
Luke 19:12-27	Matt 25:14-30	Parable of the Talents
Luke 22:30	Matt 19:28	Disciples Will Judge Israel