

The Synoptic Gospels – the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke

Introduction – Similar, but different

1. If three individuals independently wrote a story about a sporting event that they recently attended, what would you expect to find if you compared those three accounts to one another?
2. The word *synoptic* means to see together. God, the Holy Spirit, used Matthew, Mark, and Luke to see and to write about similar things. About what do the Synoptic Gospels tell us?
3. The main purpose of the Gospel writers was *content* rather than *chronology*. They each organize their material according to subject matter. They supplement one another and never contradict each other. God also used them to write to different audiences. How does all this greatly impact the way they view:
 - ⇒ Quotations
 - ⇒ Sequence of events
 - ⇒ Degree of detail

The Gospel according to Matthew

The man

- Prior to Jesus calling him as a disciples, Matthew's occupation was a _____ (Matthew 9:9-13; Mark 2:13-17; Luke 5:27-32). Therefore, he was a community outcast.
- Mark and Luke also call Matthew by this name: _____. (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27)
- "Matthew" means "Gift of God." "Levi" means "Joined to" (See Genesis 29:34).
- He was a resident of _____, and therefore a Galilean (See Matthew 9:1-13).
- As a tax collector, he knew the languages of both _____ and _____.
- It appears as though Matthew was quite wealthy. In Luke 5:29, we see that "Levi gave a **great banquet** for (Jesus) in his house. There was a **large crowd** of tax collectors and others dining with them."
- According to tradition, Matthew spent 15 years in Palestine, and later he lived in _____, possibly Antioch.

His Gospel

- It is very likely that Matthew was the first Gospel writer. It is very possible that Matthew wrote his Gospel approximately twenty years after Jesus' ascension from the city of _____ in Syria. It had become a very important center of Christianity (See Acts 11:19-26).
- The Christians who lived there were primarily _____. Therefore, the Gospel that Matthew wrote for them had a particularly _____ character.
 - ⇒ His letter assumes customs, times, and places. He doesn't offer a lot of explanation of these things.
 - ⇒ He has _____ Old Testament quotations where he states "And so was fulfilled."
 - ⇒ He makes over _____ allusions to the Old Testament.
 - ⇒ His genealogy of Jesus goes back only to _____.
 - ⇒ He refers to Jesus as the "Son of David" _____ times.
- Even though we do not know exactly when God had Matthew write this Gospel, it is likely that it was before 70 A.D. It is also very possible that it was written as early as _____ A.D.

Its characteristics

- The purpose of his Gospel was to bolster the _____ of Jews wavering under opposition and persecution. He does that in a very unique and amazing way. He proves that Jesus is the _____. He shows that Jesus is the _____ of all.
- Another characteristic is that Matthew's Gospel is a _____ Gospel. In other words, he emphasizes what it means to be a _____.
- The Gospel according to Matthew is arranged around five great discourses of Jesus. Each discourse ends with the recurring refrain, "When Jesus had finished saying these things."
 - ⇒ The first discourse, also known as the _____, ends at Matthew _____.
 - ⇒ The second discourse, in which Jesus sends his disciples to the _____, ends at Matthew _____.
 - ⇒ The third discourse, in which Jesus both reveals and conceals his kingdom using _____, ends at Matthew _____.
 - ⇒ The fourth discourse, in which Jesus teaches his disciples about _____, ends at Matthew _____.
 - ⇒ The fifth discourse, in which Jesus prepares his disciples for the _____, ends at Matthew _____.
- Things to remember about Matthew:
 - ⇒ Jesus is the promised Messiah (29 Old Testament quotations; 10 are unique).
 - ⇒ Matthew 2 – Visit of the Magi
 - ⇒ Matthew 5-7 – Sermon on the Mount
 - ⇒ Matthew 13 – Parables and their purpose
 - ⇒ Matthew 18 – Repentance and forgiveness
 - ⇒ Matthew 24-25 – End Times
 - ⇒ Matthew 28:19,20 – Great Commission; Institution of Baptism

The Gospel according to Mark

The man

- Mark, also known as _____, was from the city of _____ (Acts 12:12).
- Mark was the cousin of _____ (Colossians 4:10).
- Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabas on Paul's first missionary journey, but he returned to Jerusalem from _____ (Acts 13:13).
- When leaving for his second missionary journey, Paul opted to take _____ instead of Mark (Acts 15:36-40). Paul and Mark were later reconciled (Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24; 2 Timothy 4:11).
- Mark may have been converted by the Holy Spirit through the ministry of _____ and was with him while he was in _____ (1 Peter 5:13).

His Gospel

- Peter's apostolic ministry took him to _____, where Mark was with him (1 Peter 5:13).
- It is likely that after Peter was finished teaching in and around Rome, the Christians requested that Mark write down for them a summary of Peter's teaching. Papias, writing in 130 A.D. and citing John (Mark) as his source says, "Mark, having become Peter's interpreter, wrote down accurately, though not in order, as many as the remembered of the things said or done by the Lord. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but at a later time, as I said, [followed] Peter, who delivered his instructions according to the need [of the occasion]."
- Peter's epistles emphasized Christ's suffering and prepared the Christians for their own suffering. It appears as though Mark is also writing for disciples who are undergoing _____ and _____.
 - ⇒ Mark tells of one who, from the beginning, knew what it was like to be "with the beasts" (Mark 1:13).
 - ⇒ He tells of one who endured misunderstanding by his own family, insult, opposition, and ultimately brutal sufferings and death with a matchless dignity (Mark 14:59-62; Mark 15:5).
 - ⇒ He tells of one who predicted no less power in suffering for his own disciples (Mark 10:29,30; Mark 13:11-13).
- Due to the nature of Peter's ministry in Rome and the increase in persecution against Christians by Nero, it is likely that Mark wrote his Gospel in _____ A.D. for _____ Christians.

Its characteristics

- Mark wants to _____ Jesus as the Almighty Son of God who triumphs in suffering and death (Mark 1:1; Mark 15:39). He wants to _____ Peter's preaching as a *memorial* of the Lord's sufferings, death and resurrection (2 Peter 1:14,15). And he wants to _____ and _____ Christians as they followed Christ through sufferings to glory (Mark 8:33-35; 1 Peter 2:20-25; 1 Peter 3:14-18; 1 Peter 4:1,12-19).
- His Gospel is a Gospel of _____: works more than words (two discourses as opposed to five).
- He begins his Gospel with the ministry of John the Baptist without an account of Jesus' birth.

- Since he is writing for Roman Christians, he explains the Aramaic expressions (Mark 3:17; 5:41; 15:22). He only uses one Old Testament quotation (Mark 1:2,3). He uses Latin expressions (Mark 15:16).
- He emphasizes the almighty power of Jesus over everything that opposes us: sin, loathsome disease, demons, nature.
- His Gospel has been called “A passion story with an introduction” as over one third of his Gospel is devoted to the Passion history of our Lord.
- A key passage is Mark 10:45: “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

The Gospel according to Luke

The man

- Luke was a _____ by profession. He was a faithful friend and companion of _____ (Colossians 4:14). He was an educated man who seems to be sympathetic towards _____ (Compare Mark 5:26 with Luke 8:43). He was a _____, and not a Jew (Colossians 4:10-14).
- Luke joined Paul in _____ on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:8-10). He remained in _____ while Paul, Barnabas, and Timothy continued on (Acts 16:17,40).
- Luke again joined Paul in _____ on his third missionary journey (Acts 20:5,6) and followed Paul all the way to _____ (Acts 21:17) and then to _____ (Acts 28:14).
- He was with Paul when he wrote Colossians, Philemon, and later 2 Timothy.

His Gospel

- After traveling with Paul during so much of his missionary activities, Luke wrote his Gospel along with the book of _____ for the _____-speaking world. He addresses both books to a man by the name of Theophilus.
- Luke wrote this two-part Gospel series during or shortly after Paul’s _____ time in prison in Rome (Acts 28:31).
- It’s very possible that Luke wrote his Gospel in _____ A.D. and Acts in 62 A.D.

Its characteristics

- Luke is writing for Gentile Christians. He has a number of unique characteristics.
 - ⇒ His genealogy goes all the way back to Adam, showing that Jesus is the Savior of all.
 - ⇒ His writing style is reminiscent of someone writing Hellenistic or Roman history.
 - ⇒ He explains the Jewish localities since his readers might not be familiar with them.
 - ⇒ He exclusively uses the Septuagint when quoting from the Old Testament.
 - ⇒ His dating system is based on the dates of Roman emperors.
- Luke’s purpose is to give assurance of the certainty of the things taught about Jesus. He conducted extensive investigations into these matters. God used him to write a history that showed the deliberate plan and will of God to save the world by means of the cross. He says “It is necessary” eighteen times.

- Things to remember about Luke's Gospel include:
 - ⇒ Luke 2 – If Matthew is the most powerful of the Synoptics, Luke is the most beautiful.
 - ⇒ Songs of the saints:
 - ◆ Song of Mary (Magnificat)
 - ◆ Song of Zechariah (Benedictus)
 - ◆ Song of Simeon (Nunc Dimittis)
 - ⇒ Luke 15ff – the gospel within the Gospel; “The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10).
 - ◆ Lost sheep, lost coin, lost son
 - ◆ Zacchaeus
 - ◆ Thief on the cross
 - ◆ Pharisee and tax collector
 - ⇒ Universal nature of God's grace
 - ◆ Samaritans
 - ◆ Women
 - ◆ Genealogy goes back to Adam
 - ◆ Lepers, shepherds, and other outcasts

Your homework

For next time...

1. Review the books of the Bible you memorized for last week (Matthew through Revelation).
2. Read Acts 1:1-12:24.

Possible New Testament Timeline

Christ's Birth through the Revelation of St. John

7-4 B.C.	Christ's birth
26-30 A.D.	Jesus' ministry
Fall of 26	Jesus' baptism and temptation
Most of 27	Early Judean ministry (John 1-4)
28 and early 29	The Galilean ministry of the Synoptic Gospels
Spring to Fall 29	Special training of the Twelve
Fall of 29	Last journeys in Judea and Perea
Spring of 30	Jesus' death and resurrection
30	Pentecost: Birthday of the New Testament Church (Acts 2)
31	Death of Stephen and conversion of St. Paul (Paul spends parts of three years in Arabia.) (Acts 7 and 9)
33	Paul returns to Damascus and has to flee (Galatians 1:7; 2 Corinthians 11:32); he visits Jerusalem and meets Peter and James (Acts 9:26-30, 22:17,18; Galatians 1:17-20); he returns to Tarsus where he remained for 10 years.
43	Founding of Gentile Church at Antioch; Paul summoned to Antioch by Barnabas
44	Death of Herod Agrippa I; Death of James the Son of Zebedee (Acts 12:2)
45-49	EPISTLE OF ST. JAMES
46	Paul's second visit to Jerusalem, fourteen years after his previous visit (Galatians 2:1-3 and Acts 11:30)
47-48	St. Paul's First Missionary Journey (into Galatia)
48/49	EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS
49	Expulsion of Jews from Rome; APOSTOLIC COUNCIL in Jerusalem (Acts 15); decision reported to Galatia by Paul and Silas (Acts 16:4) confirmed what Paul wrote in his letter.
49-52	St. Paul's Second Missionary Journey
50-60	GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW
51/52	Governorship of Gallio in Corinth
51 (early)	1 THESSALONIANS from Corinth
51 (summer)	2 THESSALONIANS from Corinth
53-57	St. Paul's Third Missionary Journey
56 (spring)	1 CORINTHIANS from Ephesus
56 (summer or fall)	2 CORINTHIANS from Macedonia
56-57 (winter)	ROMANS from Corinth (or Cenchrea)
57-59	St. Paul's Caesarean Imprisonment
59	Arrival of Festus in Palestine to assume governorship; St. Paul's voyage to Rome
60	GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. LUKE
60-62	St. Paul's Imprisonment in Rome COLOSSIANS (60/61), PHILEMON (60/61), EPHESIANS (61), PHILIPPIANS (62) (The captivity Letters)
62	ACTS
62-64	1 PETER
63	GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK
64	2 PETER
63-67	Paul's final travels and execution 1 TIMOTHY (63), TITUS (63-66), 2 TIMOTHY (67) (Pastoral Letters)
64-67	Fire in Rome, Nero undertakes persecution of Christians
65-69	HEBREWS
68-80	JUDE
70	Fall of Jerusalem
90	GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN
90	1,2,3 JOHN
95	REVELATION OF ST. JOHN