

## INTERDEPENDENCE OF THE GOSPELS

### I. Importance of Genre Identification

A. Readers bring different sets of expectations to different kinds of literature

- newspaper editorial vs. newspaper article
- science fiction vs. science textbook
- historical accounts vs. Harlequin Romance novel

B. Example: Suppose you were to read about a breakthrough in genetic research that could potentially save the human race from AIDS and cancer. However, the research is highly dangerous and, if artificially manipulated gene specimens were to escape the laboratory, they could mutate beyond control and bring worldwide torment and death. If you read about this in a novel by Stephen King, you might enjoy it and recommend book to friends. But if you read about on the front page of the New York Times, you might react with some degree of panic and decide to write your senator.

C. The point is: The expectations we have of different types of literature have a profound effect on the way we read.

### II. The Scholars Task

A. **Two tasks.** We should keep in mind that the task of Gospel scholarship is two-fold:

- To *describe* as objectively as possible what he/she sees in the Gospels.
- To *explain* as fully as possible why the Gospels are the way they are.

B. **Four basic factors.** When it comes to understanding the nature of the Gospels, particularly their historicity or historical reliabilities of the Gospels, *four basic factors* that confront NT scholars

- A forty-year gap between Jesus and the Gospels
- The translation from Aramaic to Greek
- Gospel writers used the same material (source and form criticism)
- Gospel writers were editors (redaction criticism)

### III. A Forty-year gap from Jesus to the Gospels

1. The Gospels were not written by Jesus or at his dictation. They consist of recollections of what Jesus said and did during his ministry. Jesus was put to death around A.D. 30. The earliest written Gospels did not emerge until A.D. 65-70. So there is a time gap of 35-40 years.

On the one hand, during this time of 40 years, we should not assume that Jesus' teaching faded or became confused. In the ancient world, memories were better trained than today because of the relative scarcity of books and writing materials at that time.

On the other hand, we shouldn't assume that such oral material had the quality of tape recordings. Nor should we assume that teachers like Jesus wanted parrot-like reproduction.

2. The writing of the Gospels were delayed because Jesus and disciples lived in oral culture

- a. 95-97% of the people were illiterate<sup>1</sup>; only most important literature was written down (e.g., Torah); even the great mass of Jewish law—the Talmud—was passed down orally
- b. Some people even thought that the oral traditions were superior to written traditions. In about 130 A.D., Papias wrote: “I did not suppose that information from books would help me so much as the word of a living and surviving voice.”<sup>2</sup>
- c. It has been estimated that it took 4,500 hides (sheep, calves, goats, antelopes) to make the vellum for fifty Bibles.<sup>3</sup> So, a Bible like Codex Sinaiticus would have required the death of 90 animals. If one adds the cost for preparing the parchment and the scribal fee for writing it, only the very wealthy could afford a book.

**IV. Translation from Aramaic to Greek**

- 1. Jesus taught in Aramaic, but the Gospels were written in Greek.
- 2. All translation involves interpretation. Anyone familiar with translating from one language to another is aware the all translation involves some degree of interpretation. Often there is no exact word for word equivalent. Sometimes a word in one language can only be expressed by a phrase in another. This is why we have so many translations of the Bible.
- 3. The point is: The translation of Jesus' words from Aramaic to Greek necessarily involved a *significant element of interpretation*.

**V. Gospel Writers Used the Same Material<sup>4</sup>**

- 1. Use same material.** The third factor that NT scholars confront is that three Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke—use the same material.
- 2. Synoptic.** Because the material they have in common can be laid out in parallel columns and looked at together that is why Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called *synoptic* because *synoptic* means "seen together."
- 3. The Synoptic Gospels differ in size:<sup>5</sup>**

Matthew	28 chapters	1068 verses	18,293 words
Mark	16 chapters	661 verses	11,025 words
Luke	24 chapters	1149 verses	19, 376 words

<sup>1</sup> So Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, 25.

<sup>2</sup> Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.14.5.

<sup>3</sup> Bruce Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1981) 18-19.

<sup>4</sup> Much of the following is from Robert Stein, *The Synoptic Problem* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987) chapter 1.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Stein, *The Synoptic Problem* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987) 48.

Of the 18,293 words in Matthew, 7,392 (40.4%) have no parallel in Mark  
 Of the 19,376 words in Luke, 10,259 (52%) have no parallel in Mark.

However, despite their size differences, they are remarkably similar in content. The evidence suggests that the Synoptic Gospels borrowed material either from each other or from common sources.

**4. Evidence of borrowing (interdependence).** There are three types of evidence, which suggests interdependence or borrowing:

- Similarity in wording
- Similarity in order
- Similarity in parenthetical material.

**V. Evidence of borrowing (interdependence)**

**A. Exact verbal parallel**

<b>T§2: John the Baptist</b>	
<b>Matt 3:7-10</b>	<b>Luke 3:7-9</b>
3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, <u>“You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 3:8 Bear fruit that befits repentance, 3:9 and do not <b>presume</b> to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 3:10 Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”</u>	3:7 He said therefore to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, <u>“<b>You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?</b> 3:8 Bear fruits that befit repentance, and do not <b>begin</b> to say to yourselves, We have Abraham as our father’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 3:9 Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”</u>

When scholars look at parallel passages they notice the strong agreement in the parallels. In first example, there is almost 100 percent agreement in John the Baptist’s words. Only the words *begin* and *presume* differ.

**B. Similarity in Wording**

Wording of individual pericopes demonstrate an impressive agreement between the Synoptic Gospels.

Underlining: To see the literary interdependence of the Synoptic Gospels

- Use unbroken underlining for agreements that are exact
- Use broken underlining for agreements that are not exact
- Blue = agreement between all three (triple tradition)
- Red = agreement between Luke and Matthew
- Orange = agreement between Mark and Matthew
- Green = agreement between Mark and Luke

1. Example: **T§12**: Jesus in the Synagogue at Capernaum

Matt 7:28-29	Mark 1:21-28	Luke 4:31-37
<p>7:28 And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, 7:29 for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.</p>	<p>1:21 And they went into <u>Capernaum</u>; and immediately <u>on the sabbath</u> he entered the synagogue and <u>taught</u>. 1:22 <u>And they were astonished at his teaching</u>, for he taught them as one who had <u>authority</u>, and not as the scribes. 1:23 <u>And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit</u>; 1:24 <u>and he cried out</u>, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." 1:25 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" 1:26 <u>And the unclean spirit, convulsing him</u> and crying with a loud voice, <u>came out of him</u>. 1:27 <u>And they were all amazed</u>, so that <u>they questioned among themselves</u>, saying, "What is this? A new teaching! <u>With authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.</u>" 1:28 <u>And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.</u></p>	<p>4:31 And he went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. <u>And he was teaching them on the sabbath</u>; 4:32 <u>and they were astonished at his teaching</u>, for his word was with <u>authority</u>. 4:33 <u>And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon; and he cried out with a loud voice</u>, 4:34 "Ah! <u>What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.</u>" 4:35 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" <u>And when the demon had thrown him down</u> in the midst, <u>he came out of him</u>, having done him no harm. 4:36 <u>And they were all amazed and said to one another</u>, "What is this word? For <u>with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.</u>" 4:37 <u>And reports of him went out into every place in the surrounding region.</u></p>

Directions: Read and underline the triple tradition in the following parallels:

2. **T§188**: Jesus blesses the children (Mt 19:13-15; Mk 10:13-16; Lk 18:15-17)
3. **T§207**: Question about the resurrection (Mt 22:23-33; 12:18-27; Lk 20:27-40)
4. **T§214**: Signs of the End of the Age (Mt. 24:4-8; Mk 13:5-8; Lk 21:8-11)

*Observations*: What do you see?

*Explanation*: Why do they agree so closely?

A first response has been that they report the same event or saying of Jesus; they show verbal agreement because they report exactly what was said or done. However, there are several problems with this view:

- It does not explain why accounts disagree at times.

- It fails to consider that Jesus spoke Aramaic; the agreements are in Greek.
- It is unlikely that each translator translated the Aramaic exactly the same.
- When John reports the same incident or saying, there is little agreement.

A second response has been that the Holy Spirit guided the writers. While this is true in my mind, it is an insufficient explanation. There are two problems with this view:

- It does not explain why there are differences between the Synoptic Gospels.
- It does not explain why there are few agreements between the Synoptics & John.

The third response has been that the writers used some sort of common source, either written or oral. That is the position held by most conservative, moderate, and liberal scholars!

### C. Similarity in Order <sup>6</sup>

In addition to word agreement, there is general agreement in the order of pericopes. Keep an eye on Mark. Note how Matthew and Luke follow or deviate from Mark.

#### 1. Example:

	Matthew	Mark	Luke
a. Jesus' teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum		1:21-22	4:31-32
b. Jesus' healing of the demoniac in Capernaum		1:23-28	4:33-37
c. Jesus' healing of Peter's mother-in-law	8:14-15	1:29-31	4:38-39
d. Jesus' healing in the evening	8:16-17	1:32-34	4:40-41
e. Jesus leaves Capernaum		1:35-38	4:42-43
f. Jesus' preaching in Galilee—a summary	4:23	1:39	4:44
g. The miraculous catch of fish			5:1-11
h. Jesus' healing of the leper	8:1-4	1:40-45	5:12-16
i. Jesus' healing of the paralytic	9:1-8	2:1-12	5:17-26
j. The calling of Levi	9:9-13	2:13-17	5:27-32
k. Controversy over fasting	9:14-17	2:18-22	5:33-39
l. Controversy over plucking grain	12:1-8	2:23-28	6:1-5
m. Controversy over healing on the sabbath	12:9-14	3:1-6	6:6-11
n. Healing by the sea—a summary	4:24-25 12:15-16	3:7-12	6:17-19
o. The choosing of the Twelve	10:1-4	3:13-19	6:12-16

(1) There is obvious agreement between Mark and Luke, except for the last two events which are reversed.

(2) There is a general agreement between Mark and Matthew, except the “summaries” and “choosing of the twelve” passages are in different locations.

<sup>6</sup>The following tables are from Robert Stein, *Synoptic Problem* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987) 35-6.

**2. Example:** In the next table, there is common order, but with significant additions and omissions.

	Matthew	Mark	Luke
a. Peter's confession of Christ	16:13-20	8:27-30	9:18-21
b. First passion prediction	16:21-23	8:31-33	9:22
c. Teachings on discipleship	16:24-28	8:34-9:1	9:23-27
d. The transfiguration	17:1-9	9:2-10	9:28-36
e. Concerning the return of Elijah	17:10-13	9:11-13	
f. Jesus' healing of the demon-possessed boy	17:14-21	9:14-29	9:37-43a
g. Second passion prediction	17:22-23	9:30-32	9:43b-45
h. The temple tax	17:24-27		
i. Teachings on true greatness	18:1-5	9:33-37	9:46-48
j. Concerning the use of Jesus' name		9:38-41	9:49-50
k. Teachings on temptations	18:6-9	9:42-50	17:1-2 14:34-35
l. Parable of the lost sheep	18:10-14		15:3-7
m. Teachings on reproving a brother	18:15-18		
n. Teachings on the presence of Jesus	18:19-20		
o. Teachings on reconciliation with a brother	18:21-22		17:4
p. Parable of the unforgiving servant	18:23-35		
q. Departure to Judea <i>Largest block of Lukan teaching material</i>	19:1-2	10:1	9:51 (9:51-18:14)
r. Teachings on divorce	19:3-12	10:2-12	
s. Jesus blesses the children	19:13-15	10:13-16	18:15-17
t. The rich young man	19:16-22	10:17-22	18:18-23
u. Teachings on the dangers of riches	19:23-30	10:23-31	18:24-30
v. Parable of the laborers in the vineyard	20:1-16		
w. Third passion prediction	20:17-19	10:32-34	18:31-34
x. The request of the sons of Zebedee	20:20-28	10:35-45	
y. The healing of the blind man	20:29-34	10:46-52	18:35-43

- What material has Matthew *added* that Mark does not have?  
Unit (h) and Units (l) to (p)
- What material has Matthew *omitted* that Mark includes?  
Unit (j)
- What material has Luke *added* that Mark does not have?  
Units (e), (i), (m), (n), and (p). Also, Luke adds Jesus' journey narrative (9:51 - 18:14)!
- What material has Luke *omitted* that Mark includes?  
Units (e) and (x).

**3. Example:** In the next table, note the common order, but some differences do exist.

	Matthew	Mark	Luke
a. The mother and brothers of Jesus	12:46–50	3:31–35	8:19–21
b. Parable of the sower	13:1–9	4:1–9	8:4–8
c. Why Jesus taught in parables	13:10–17	4:10–12	8:9–10
d. The interpretation of the parable of the sower	13:18–23	4:13–20	8:11–15
e. Parables of lamp on a stand and “measure upon measure”		4:21–25	8:16–18
f. Parable of the growing seed		4:26–29	
g. Parable of the weeds	13:24–30		
h. Parable of the mustard seed	13:31–32	4:30–32	13:18–19
i. Parable of the leaven	13:33		13:20–21
j. Jesus’ use of parables	13:34–35	4:33–34	
k. The interpretation of the parable of the weeds	13:36–43		
l. Parables of hidden treasure and pearl	13:44–46		
m. Parable of the net	13:47–50		
n. Parable of the householder	13:51–52		
o. Jesus stills the storm	8:23–27	4:35–41	8:22–25
p. Jesus heals the Gerasene demoniac	8:28–34	5:1–20	8:26–39
q. Jesus heals Jairus’ daughter	9:18–26	5:21–43	8:40–56
r. Jesus rejected at Nazareth	13:53–58	6:1–6a	(4:16–30)

- Luke places units (a) and (r) in a different order than Mark.
- Luke adds unit (i)
- Matthew adds units (e) and (f) and a collection of parable from (k) to (n), but returns to Mark's order after this departure.

**D. Similarity in Parenthetical Material**

Parenthetical material seems to confirm that the SG relied on a common written source. It is unlikely that two or three writers would by coincidence insert into their accounts exactly the same editorial comments at exactly the same place.

**1. Example:** “Let the reader understand” in **T§216:** The Desolating Sacrilege

In **T§216**, The Desolating Sacrilege (Matt 24:15 and Mark 13:14), we find the *same editorial words*, “Let the reader understand.” This comment was not necessary to Jesus’ discourse; it points to a written source shared in common!

**2. Example:** “Then he said to the paralytic” in **T§52:** The Healing of the Paralytic

In the Healing of the Paralytic (Matt 9:6, Mark 2:10, and Luke 5:24) we find the *same editorial comment*, which sounds like a *stage direction* in a play production, “He then said to the paralytic”—like a stage directors saying, “Now turn away from the Pharisees and look at the paralytic.” Again this comment was unnecessary.

(Another parenthetical bit is “for he had said...” in Mk 5:8 and Lk 8:29).

### E. Similarity in Biblical Quotations

At times we find the exact same form of an OT quotation. This would not be unusual if that form was identical with the Hebrew OT or the Greek LXX. However, when we find an identical quotation, which is different from the Hebrew or Greek, this similarity requires an explanation.

#### 1. Example: The quotation from Isaiah in T§1: John the Baptist

T§1: John the Baptist		
Matt 3:3	Mark 1:2-3	Luke 3:4
<p>This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, “The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” (NRSV)</p> <p>οὗτος γάρ ἐστιν ὁ ῥηθεὶς διὰ Ἡσαΐου τοῦ προφήτου λέγοντος· φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ· ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου, εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ.</p>	<p>As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight," (NRSV).</p> <p>Καθὼς γέγραπται ἐν τῷ Ἡσαΐα τῷ προφήτῃ· ἰδοὺ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου, ὃς κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδὸν σου· φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ· ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου, εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ,</p>	<p>As it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." (NRSV)</p> <p>ὡς γέγραπται ἐν βίβλῳ λόγων Ἡσαΐου τοῦ προφήτου· φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ· ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου, εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ·</p>

Matthew, Mark, and Luke’s quotations are exactly the same, word-for-word. However, Isaiah has it slightly different.

Isaiah 40:3
<p><b>NRSV:</b> A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." (NRSV)</p>
<p><b>LXX:</b> φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν</p>
<p><b>Hebrew:</b> קוֹל קוֹרֵא בַּמִּדְבָּר פְּנֵי הַרְדִּי יְהוָה יִשְׁרֹן בְּעֵרְבָה מְסַלָּה לֵאלֹהֵינוּ  <small>our God a highway the desert make the LORD the way clear the wilderness is calling a voice</small></p>

This suggests that Matthew, Mark, and Luke were copying from each other or the same source and not directly from Isa. 40:3. This supports the interdependence theory.

Another example: Mark 7:7. “[As Isaiah said] ...7:7 in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.” (See parallel in Matt 15:9).

## VI. Gospel Writers were Editors

The Gospel writers were also *editors*. They used the same material, but they *shaped* their material and they *interpreted* the traditions they used. The best way to show that is to *look at the kind of features that have caught the scholars' attention*.

### A. Same units, different combinations

Look at the "Sermon on the Mount. Notice that Matthew's material moves in order from Matt. 5-7. What do you observe about Luke and Mark?

Matthew's Sermon on the Mount		Luke	Mark
1 The Beatitudes	5:3-12	6:20b-23	—
2 Parable of Salt	5:13	14:34-35	9:49-50
3 Parable of Light	5:14-16	8:16	4:21
4 The Law and the Prophets	5:17-20	16:16-17	—
5 On Murder	5:21-26	12:57-59	—
6 On Adultery	5:27-30	—	—
7 On Divorce	5:31-32	16:18	10:11-12
8 On Oaths	5:33-37	—	—
9 On Retaliation	5:38-42	6:29-30	—
10 On Love for One's Enemies	5:43-48	6:27-28, 32-36	—
11 On Almsgiving	6:1-4	—	—
12 On Prayer	6:5-8	—	—
13 The Lord's Prayer	6:9-15	11:1-4	—
14 On Fasting	6:16-18	—	—
15 On Treasures in Heaven	6:19-21	12:33-34	—
16 Good Eyes	6:22-23	11:34-36	—
17 On Serving Two Masters	6:24	16:13	—
18 On Anxiety	6:25-34	12:22-32	—
19 On Judging Others	7:1-5	6:37-42	4:24-25
20 On Profaning the Holy	7:6	—	—
21 On Answers to Prayer	7:7-11	11:9-13	—
22 The Golden Rule	7:12	6:31	—
23 The Narrow Gate	7:13-14	13:23-24	—
24 Parable of the Tree and its Fruit	7:15-20	6:43-45	—
25 Sayings, "Lord, Lord"	7:21-23	6:46; 13:25-27	—
18 The Wise and Foolish Builders	7:24-27	6:47-49	—
19 End of the Sermon	7:28-29	—	—

### What do we observe?

Material arranged one way in Matt; another in Lk & Mk

### How can we explain this?

One explanation is that Matthew *constructed* the Sermon by grouping elements of Jesus' teaching, which had come from *different* points in his ministry. If so, then the Sermon on

the Mount was never delivered by Jesus as a complete sermon. The Sermon on the Mount was *not historical event*, but a literary device used by Matthew to present some of Jesus' teaching.

**The main point:** The framework of a single sermon does not appear to be to be historical, even though the content may well have come from Jesus.

**B. Same account, different lengths**

The Gospel writers present *longer and shorter* versions of the same account. Look at the material concerning the Gerasene demoniac and Jairus' daughter and a woman's faith

1. Example: **T§106** The Gerasens Demoniac

How many verses?

- Mark =
- Matthew =
- Luke =

2. Example: **T§107** Jairus' Daughter and a Woman's Faith

How many verses?

- Mark =
- Matthew =
- Luke =

**Comments:** Evangelists were not concerned with merely reproducing the story. They felt free to lengthen, shorten, or otherwise edit the same tradition.

**C. Same account, different emphases**

The Gospel Writers also presented the same account, but with different details and emphases. Take a look at the account of the *Centurion's Servant*

<b>T §46: The Centurion's Servant</b>	
<b>Matt 8:5-13</b>	<b>Luke 7:1-10</b>
<p>8:5 As <u>he entered Caper'na-um, a centurion</u> came forward to him, beseeching him 8:6 and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, in terrible distress." 8:7 And he said to him, "I will come and heal him." 8:8 But <u>the centurion</u> answered him, "Lord, <u>I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant will be healed.</u> 8:9 <u>For I am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, Go,' and he goes, and to another, Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, Do this,' and he does it."</u> 8:10 <u>When Jesus heard him, he marveled, and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I say to you, not even in</u></p>	<p>7:1 After he had ended all his sayings in the hearing of the people <u>he entered Caper'na-um.</u> 7:2 Now <u>a centurion</u> had a slave who was dear to him, who was sick and at the point of death. 7:3 When he heard of Jesus, <b>he sent to him elders</b> of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his slave. 7:4 And when they came to Jesus, they besought him earnestly, saying, "<b>He is worthy</b> to have you do this for him, 7:5 for he loves our nation, and he built us our synagogue." 7:6 And Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, <u>the centurion sent friends to him,</u> saying to him, "Lord, <b>do not trouble yourself,</b> for <u>I am not worthy to have you come under my</u></p>

<p><b>Israel have I found such faith.</b> 8:11 I tell you, many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, 8:12 while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth." 8:13 And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; be it done for you <b>as you have believed.</b>" And the servant was healed at that very moment.</p>	<p>roof; 7:7 <b>therefore I did not presume to come to you.</b> <u>But say the word, and let my servant be healed.</u> 7:8 <u>For I am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me: and I say to one, Go,' and he goes; and to another, Come,' and he comes; and to my slave, Do this,' and he does it."</u> 7:9 <u>When Jesus heard this he marveled at him, and turned and said to the multitude that followed him, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith."</u> 7:10 And <b>when those who had been sent</b> returned to the house, they found the slave well.</p>
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**Observations:** Is the core of each story the same story? If so, what are some major differences between the two accounts?

- There are enough similarities to say that the core story is the same; they report the same event. Each story recounts a dialogue between Jesus and a centurion regarding the healing of his son.
- The major difference is in Matt, the centurion approaches Jesus personally; in Luke, the centurion sends others.

**Explanations:**

**What inferences can we draw?**

- **First:** If it is the same story, then it is clear that the Evangelists were not concerned with certain details; apparently they did not see their task as telling the story exactly the way it happened.
- **Second:** The difference does not affect the central part of the story, but it does mean that we today cannot be sure of whether or not Jesus actually spoke to the centurion face to face.

**What would say is the central message of both accounts?**

- Both express the centurion's confidence in Jesus' authority.

**Why do you suppose the evangelists told the story differently?**

- Each was trying to make a different point.

**What are the different theological emphases?**

- **Matthew** seems to emphasize *faith*. Matthew centers on Jesus' praise of the centurion's faith (v. 10). Matthew re-emphasizes faith at the end of the story (v. 13). This may be why Matthew also inserted vv. 11-12 (Luke has it in a different context) to show that entrance into the kingdom is open to all who have faith, even Gentiles like the centurion.
- **Luke** seems to emphasize the centurion's *humility* (v. 7). Not coming to Jesus highlights the centurion's humility—"I am not worth ... therefore I did not presume to come to you" (v. 7).

**Comment:**

- In this example, which could be multiplied, we see a core of *historical information*, which is of central importance. But we also see the *interpretive* use of that common core.

**D. Same account with corrections**

The Evangelists seem to *correct* misleading impressions given by earlier versions. It appears that the Evangelists sometimes go out of their way to change an earlier version. Take a look at account of *Jesus' Rejection at Nazareth*

<b>T§108: Jesus' Rejection at Nazareth</b>	
<b>Matt 13:53-58</b>	<b>Mark 6:1-6a</b>
13:53 And when Jesus had finished these parables, <u>he went away from there</u> , 13:54 <u>and coming to his own country he taught them in their synagogue</u> , so that <u>they were astonished</u> , and <u>said</u> , "Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works? 13:55 <u>Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary?</u> <u>And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?</u> 13:56 <u>And are not all his sisters with us?</u> Where then did this man get all this?" 13:57 <u>And they took offense at him</u> . But <u>Jesus said to them</u> , "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house." 13:58 <u>And he did not do</u> many mighty works there, because of their <u>unbelief</u> .	6:1 <u>He went away from there and came to his own country</u> ; and his disciples followed him. 6:2 And on the sabbath <u>he began to teach in the synagogue</u> ; and many who heard him <u>were astonished</u> , saying, " <u>Where did this man get all this? What is the wisdom given to him? What mighty works are wrought by his hands!</u> " 6:3 <u>Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?"</u> <u>And they took offense at him</u> . 6:4 <u>And Jesus said to them</u> , " <u>A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.</u> " 6:5 <u>And he could do no mighty work there</u> , except that he laid his hands upon a few sick people and healed them. 6:6 And he marveled <u>because of their unbelief</u> .

**Observations: Is this the same account? Are Matthew and Mark telling about the same event? If so, what are some significant differences?**

- Same event. Too many details are the same to be otherwise.

**What are some of the significant differences you see?**

- Carpenter
  - Mark identifies Jesus as "the carpenter"
  - Matthew identifies Jesus as "the carpenter's son"
- Mary
  - Mark has "the son of Mary"
  - Matthew has "his mother called Mary"
- Jesus' wisdom and works
  - In Mark, the people are skeptical about Jesus wisdom and works (v. 2)
  - In Matt, the people assume Jesus had wisdom and did mighty works (v. 54)
- Mighty works

- In Mark, Jesus "*could do no* might work there" (v. 5)
- In Matthew, Jesus "*did not do* many might works there" (v. 58)

**Explanation: If Matthew was copying from Mark, how do you explain the differences?**

- Response: “might works”
  - Mark's phrase may have been offensive;
  - Matthew corrected it without contradicting Mark (see Mk exception clause)
  - Unlikely that Mark changed Matthew, introducing a more difficult phrase.
  
- Response: “carpenter”
  - Mark identifies Jesus as a “carpenter” (tekton), which may have been a little offensive, because *tekton* was a low level worker
  
- Response: “Mary”
  - In Jesus' time, a person was identified by his/her father.
  - To identify someone by his/her mother indicates the father was unknown.
  - So Mark's phrase, while suggesting something odd about Jesus' birth, would have been insulting because it suggested Jesus was illegitimate
  - What did Matthew do with Mark’s phrase? He used the same words as Mark, but changed their relationship enough to eliminate the implied insult.
  
- **Comments:**
  - On the one hand, Matthew stayed as close to Mark’s wording as possible. Matthew didn’t have a careless or arrogant attitude toward the tradition.
  - On the other hand, Matthew *did* alter Mark’s wording. Matthew didn't see his task as merely repeating the tradition word for word with meticulous accuracy.
  - We have a core of *historical information*,
  - But we also have *interpretation*—Matt changed tradition to suit his purposes.

**E. Same tradition, different versions**

We also *different versions* of the same tradition. Look at the *Lord's Prayer*

<b>T §30: The Lord’s Prayer</b>	
<b>Matt 6:9-15</b>	<b>Luke 11:2-4</b>
6:9 Pray then like this: Our <u>Father</u> who art in heaven, <u>Hallowed be thy name</u> . 6:10 <u>Thy kingdom come</u> . Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. 6:11 <u>Give us this day our daily bread</u> ; 6:12 <u>And forgive us our debts</u> [ <i>opheilēmata</i> ], As we also have <u>forgiven</u> our debtors; 6:13 <u>And lead us not into temptation</u> , But deliver us from evil. 6:14 For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; 6:15 but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.	11:2 And he said to them, "When you pray, say: " <u>Father, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come</u> . 11:3 <u>Give us each day our daily bread</u> ; 11:4 <u>and forgive us our sins</u> [ <i>hamartias</i> ], for we ourselves <u>forgive</u> every one who is <u>indebted</u> to us; <u>and lead us not into temptation</u> ."

**Observation: Are there enough similarities to say we dealing with the same prayer? If so, what differences do you see?**

- Responses:
  - Luke's version is shorter, having four petitions.
  - Matthew's version is longer, having six petitions, adding the 3rd and 6th.
  - Luke has an abrupt beginning--"Father"
  - Matthew has a more gentele beginning--"Our Father"
  - Luke adds the word "daily," stressing the daily use of the prayer (v. 3)
  - Matthew may not have viewed his prayer as something to be practiced daily

**Explanation: How can we explain the differences?**

- Response:
  - Perhaps Luke's prayer was used on a personal and daily basis
  - Matthew's is fuller, more polished, and balanced prayer; perhaps it was used for congregational worship; it seems to show liturgical shaping.
- Concluding comment:
  - The prayer is "indisputably" the prayer, which Jesus taught his disciples.<sup>7</sup>
  - But Jesus taught his disciples to *use* it, not merely repeat the precise words of Jesus.
  - Hence, it appears as though the early church felt the freedom the shape and develop the prayer to suit their needs.

## VII. Conclusions

### A. Luke 1:1-4

#### T&E: Luke's Prologue to the Gospel

**Luke 1:1-4.** <sup>1</sup> Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, <sup>2</sup> just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, <sup>3</sup> I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, <sup>4</sup> so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed. (NRSV)

- Luke tells his readers that he was aware of and used other sources. Note that:
  - Others wrote before Luke concerning the acts and teaching of Jesus.
  - The word "many" is ambiguous, but suggests quit a few.
  - It suggests that Luke made use of these sources--oral and written.

### B. Conclusions and Implications

First, to understand the nature of the Gospels, we make meticulous and disciplined *observations* and then we offer *explanations* of what we see.

<sup>7</sup>This is Dunn's language. I think Dunn is saying that the *core* is Jesus' prayer (as he described other common material earlier); see James Dunn, *The Evidence for Jesus* (Louisville: Westminster, 1985) 24. Dunn's view may accord with the Jesus Seminar which gives the prayer in Matthew a mixed rating; all colors are represented: red (Jesus undoubtedly said this), pink (Jesus probably said something like this), gray (these are Jesus' ideas), and black (Jesus did not say this). Only "our Father" is red. See Robert Funk and Roy Hoover, *The Five Gospels* (New York: Macmillan, 1993) 148, cf. 36.

Second, we observe that the Synoptic Gospels show literary *interdependence*. That is, the agreements in wording, order, parenthetical comments, and biblical quotations suggest that Matthew, Mark, and Luke used a common written source as a basis for their Gospels.

Third, the Gospel writers were editors. That is, they use the same units, but organized them in different combinations, added and subtracted material, provided corrections, and gave different versions. In this way, each writer shaped their Gospel to emphasize different things. As editors or redactors, each writer has something unique to tell us. For this reason, for example, we should “let Matthew be Matthew” and not force Matthew to fit Mark or Luke’s agenda. Furthermore, we should not force the Gospels into some an artificial one Gospel harmony.

Fourth, the differences in the order of material suggest the Gospels do not reveal the exact historical chronology of Jesus’ life. At best, the Gospels give a rough chronology of Jesus’ life. The Gospels move from birth & baptism to crucifixion & resurrection. They move from a Galilean ministry to a Judean ministry.

Fifth, the Gospels seem to be organized by subject matter or topic, not by exact historical chronology. For example:

- Mark puts five miracles together in Mk 1:23 - 2:12.
- Mark puts five controversy stories in Mk 2:13 - 3:6.
- Matthew puts parables together in chapter 13
- Matthew alternates between collections of narratives and sayings:
  - Narratives 1-4
  - Sayings 5-7
  - Narratives 8-9
  - Sayings 10
  - Narratives 11-12
  - Sayings 13
  - Narratives 14-17
  - Sayings 18
  - Narratives 19-22
  - Sayings 23-25
  - Narratives 26-28

Sixth, the Gospels are human products. Their origin and development can be understood and explained in the same way as other literary pieces. This does not eliminate God from superintending the process. What it does mean is the Gospels can be understood and appreciated by using ordinary literary and historical analysis that we use on other pieces of human literature.