

MARKAN PRIORITY

I. Explaining the Gospel Similarities — The Synoptic Problem

The so-called “synoptic problem” refers to the problem of explaining both the verbal similarities and differences among the Synoptic Gospel.

A. How much overlap is there? ¹

Mark 661 verses (11,025 words)

Luke 1149 verses (19,376 words)

Matthew 1068 verses (18,293 words)

Matthew reproduces 606 (92%) of Mark’s 661 verses, but compresses Mark’s 606 verses into 500 verses.

Luke reproduces about 584 (88%) of Mark’s 661 verses, but compresses Mark’s 584 verses into about 350 verses.

Matthew and Luke compress Mark

B. Why the similarities?

1. Holy Spirit? Some people believe that the similarity is due to the H.S. having guided the writers of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. While I believe the H.S. is involved the writing and reading of the Scriptures—though I can give no detail on how or to what degree—if we grant the H.S. superintendence in some way, we can go further.

Simply appealing to H.S. as an explanation, does not explain the differences, especially why John is so different. Also, simply invoking the H.S. is a one-dimensional, “don’t ask any more questions,” type of explanation.

Perhaps we should consider that the H.S. helps us understand and explain the differences and similarities we see in the Gospels. Perhaps explaining and drawing the significance is part of the work of the Spirit.

1 Cor. 2:12-13. ¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. ¹³ And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual. (NRSV)

2. Narrate same event? Another explanation is that the Gospels are similar because they all narrate the same events. They are accurate historical records. Without denying

¹The following statistics are based on William Barclay, *Introduction To The First Three Gospels* (Revised Edition, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 86, and from Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 48. Note that Barclay’s and Stein’s statistics do not agree completely, particularly regarding how much of Mark is reproduced in Luke.

that the Gospels provide accurate accounts of what Jesus said and did, this explanation does not account for the different order of events that we find.

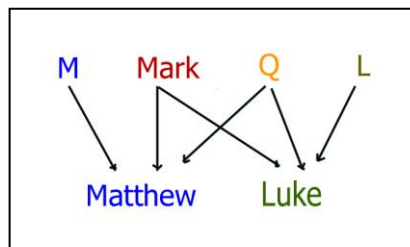
These two explanations do not explain adequately the kind of similarities we find in the Synoptic Gospels. Some other explanation must be sought.

3. Common oral sources? As early as 1796, von Herder explained the “synoptic problem” by positing common oral traditions used by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. There is little doubt that the Gospel traditions circulated orally for a number of years. However, the nature of the strong verbal agreements, suggests common written sources.

4. Common written sources? This seems most likely. There are several theories that explain the synoptic problem.

C. Synoptic theories and hypotheses

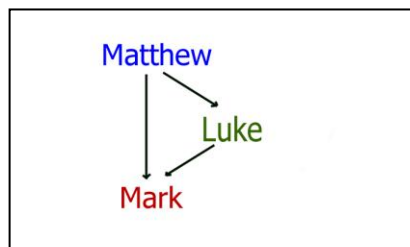
1. Four Source Hypothesis — Streeter (1924) and most scholars today



Also called the Two Source Hypothesis, this is the dominant source theory among scholars today.

Weakness: It requires the Q-hypothesis, a hypothetical document for which we have no extant manuscripts. Also, it cannot explain why Matthew and Luke occasionally agree against Mark. For example, in the Parable of the Mustard Seed (Mt. 13:31-32; Mk 4:30-31; Lk 13:18-19)—which is triple tradition and not considered q-material—Luke and Matthew add the phrase, “a person having taken it ... becomes a tree... branches” (exact verbal agreement), which is not in Mark.

2. Two Gospel Hypothesis — Griesbach (1783) and Farmer (1964)



Matthew was the first Gospel, Luke used Matthew, and Mark used both Matthew and Luke. In the US, this is the leading contender to the 4SH. This theory was first proposed by Owen (1764).

Strengths: It does not need a hypothetical source-Q. It can explain why Luke and Matthew occasionally agree against Mark; why Mark and Matthew can agree against Luke; and why Luke and Mark can agree against Matthew. It can explain the 213 redundancies in Mark.

For a typical Markan redundancy, see **T§14**. Mark has “when evening came, as the sun was settings” (Mk 1:31), whereas Matthew has “when evening came” (Matt 8:16) and Luke has “while the sun was setting” (Lk 4:40).

Weakness: The arguments in favor of Markan priority are strong. In addition, there is difficulty claiming that Luke used Matthew; e.g., why did Luke tear apart Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount apart? It conflicts with church tradition, which remembers Papias claiming that Mark’s source was Peter.

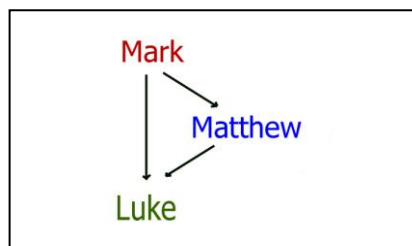
Regarding the redundancies, the Griesbach hypothesis is weak. GH would suggest that Mark borrow from Matthew and Luke to create a redundancy. But consider the following statistics:²

- Of the 213 redundancies in Mark, only 17 look like he combined phrases from Matt and Luke.]

[Of the 217 redundancies in Mark, only 17 times does it come from combining Matt and Luke’s phrases]

- In 39 instances Matt and Luke have the same redundancy and lack the other
- In 37 instances they have neither redundancy
- In 60 instances Matt has one or both parallels and Luke has neither
- In 11 instances Luke has both parallels and Matthew has one
- In 17 instances Matthew has both parallels and Luke has one
- In 6 instances Matthew and Luke have both parallels

3. Farrer Hypothesis — Farrer (1955) and Mark Goodacre (2000)



Mark was first; then Matthew used Mark; finally Luke used both Matthew and Mark. In this way, Q is not necessary. In England, this is the leading contender to the 4SH.

Weakness: It cannot explain why Luke did not use M-material; e.g., Matthew’s unique infancy stories or why the genealogies are different. In addition, there is difficulty explaining why Luke tore apart Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount.

² Robert Stein, “Synoptic Problem” in *The Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, Joel B. Gren, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall eds. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992, page 787.

II. The Priority of Mark³

There are six arguments for Markan priority.

A. First: Length

Fact: Mark is the shortest Gospel.

Assumption: The shorter gospel is likely to be the earlier gospel and Mk is shorter.

First problem with the abridgement theory is why would Mark omit so much material (what is now called M, L, and Q).

Some have argued that Mark is an abridgement of Matthew and Luke; that is, Mark had a copy of Matthew and Luke and wrote a *Reader's Digest*-like condensed version.

- 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 (52.9%) have no parallel in Mark.

Why would Mark omit Jesus' birth, the Lord's Prayer, the Sermon on the Mount, and the resurrection appearances?⁴ The response is that Mark probably did not use Matthew or Luke, because if he had them, he would have included their material.

Second problem with the abridgement theory is why are Mark's individual pericopes generally longer than the parallels in Matthew and Luke.⁵

Take, for example, **T§106**, the Gerasene Demoniac:

- Matthew 8:28-34 has seven verses (135 words),
- Luke 8:26-39 has thirteen verses (293 words),
- Mark 5:1-20 has twenty verses (325 words).

The abridgment theory is unconvincing. Mark did not know Matthew or Luke. Thus, when we consider the interdependence of the Gospels, it is likely that Mark was written prior to Matthew and Luke, and Matthew and Luke borrowed from Mark.

B. Second: Grammar and Style

Fact: Mark's grammar is poorer than either Matthew or Luke.

Assumption: The Gospel with the poorer grammar and style is probably the earlier. It looks like Matthew and Luke used and improved Mark's Gospel in six ways.

Evidence: Four Pieces of evidence.

³ The following arguments are from Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 48-88.

⁴ Mark probably would not have omitted a major teaching section like the Sermon on the Mount, had he known of it, since the rest of Mark's gospel emphasizes the teaching role of Jesus (demonstrated by his summaries [6:6b and 10:1], explanatory notes [6:34, 9:31; 11:17, 18], and redactive seams [1:21-22, 2:13, 4:1-2, 6:2, 8:31, 12:35, 38]).

⁵ Stein lists fifty-one parallels where Mark is the longest 21 times, Matthew 11 times, and Luke 10 times. In nine instances, the differences were negligible. See Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 49-50.

1. Corrected subject-verb disagreement

T§105: The Stilling of the Storm		
Matt 8:18, 23-27	Mark 4:35-41	Luke 8:22-25
8:27 They were amazed, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea [<u>plural subject</u>] obey [<u>plural verb</u>] him?"	4:41. And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea [<u>plural subject</u>] obey [<u>singular verb</u>] him?"	8:25 He said to them, "Where is your faith?" They were afraid and amazed, and said to one another, "Who then is this, that he commands even the winds and the water [<u>plural subject</u>], and they obey [<u>plural verb</u>] him?"

2. Eliminated Aramaic expressions

Examples of Matthew and Luke eliminating Mark's Aramaic expressions:

- Mk 3:17 James and John are called *Boanerges* (sons of thunder); not in Mt or Lk
- Mk 5:41 Jesus says "*Talitha cumi*" (little girl arise); not in Mt or Lk
- Mk 7:11 Jesus uses term *Corban* (given to God); not in Mt
- Mk 7:34 Jesus says *Ephaphatha* (be opened); not in Mt
- Mk 14:36 Jesus prays *Abba*; not in Mt or Lk
- Mk 15:22 Jesus crucified at *Golgotha* (place of skull); in Mt, but not Lk
- Mk 15:24 Jesus says *Eloi, Eloi* (my God, my God); in Mt

3. Eliminated Mark's redundancies

Matthew and Luke eliminated most of Mark's redundancies.⁶

a. Example: T§14: The Sick Healed at Evening

Mark 1:32: "that evening, at sundown ..." Matt 8:16: "that evening" Luke 4:40: "at sundown"

b. Example: T§45: The Healing of a Leper

Mark 1:42: "And immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed" Matt 8:3b: "Immediately his leprosy was cleansed." Luke 5:13c: "Immediately the leprosy left him."
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4. Eliminates Mark's stylistic annoyances

Mark uses the term "immediately" (*euthus*) 41 times to join passages, but Matthew reduces the uses *euthus* to five times, Luke once. Matthew and Luke stylistically clean up Mark. For example, see the eleven times Mark uses "immediately" in Mk 1:10-43.

⁶So Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 61.

Mark 1:10-43 (NASB)	
10	And <u>immediately</u> (<i>euthus</i>) coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him;
12	And <u>immediately</u> (<i>euthus</i>) the Spirit impelled Him <i>to go</i> out into the wilderness.
18	And they <u>immediately</u> (<i>euthus</i>) left the nets and followed Him.
20	And <u>immediately</u> (<i>euthus</i>) He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him.
21	And they went into Capernaum; and <u>immediately</u> (<i>euthus</i>) on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and <i>began</i> to teach.
23	And just then [<u>immediately</u>] (<i>euthus</i>) there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,
28	And <u>immediately</u> (<i>euthus</i>) the news about Him went out everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee.
29	And <u>immediately</u> (<i>euthus</i>) after they had come out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.
30	Now Simon's mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever; and <u>immediately</u> (<i>euthus</i>) they spoke to Him about her.
42	And <u>immediately</u> (<i>euthus</i>) the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.
43	And He sternly warned him and <u>immediately</u> (<i>euthus</i>) sent him away

C. Third: Difficult readings

Fact: Mark has more “difficult” readings. Mark seems to say some things that might be embarrassing for Christians, because implies negative things about Jesus and the disciples.

Assumption: The Gospel with the more “difficult” readings is the earlier Gospel.

Evidence: Mark’s Gospel exhibits theological difficulties or embarrassments that Matthew and Luke do not. Thus, Matt and Lk probably eliminated Mark’s "harder readings."

1. Negative statements about Jesus eliminated

T §14: The Sick Healed at Evening		
Matt 8:16-17	Mark 1:32-34	Luke 4:40-41
16 That evening they brought to him many who were possessed with demons; and he cast out the spirits with a word, and cured all who were sick. 17 This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah, "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases."	32 That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. 33 And the whole city was gathered around the door. 34 And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many	40 As the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various kinds of diseases brought them to him; and he laid his hands on each of them and cured them. 41 Demons also came out of many, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow

T §14: The Sick Healed at Evening		
Matt 8:16-17	Mark 1:32-34	Luke 4:40-41
	because they knew him.	them to speak, because they knew that he was the Messiah.

Mark might have been interpreted as saying the Jesus lacked sufficient power to heal “all” and could only heal “many”. The word “many” can mean “all,” since it is a semiticism for “all” (cf. Isa 53:12). However, Luke and Matthew apparently wanted to eliminate the ambiguity.

Other: T§108: Jesus Rejected at Nazareth (Mt. 13:53-58; Mk 6:1-6a)

2. Negative statements about disciples eliminated

Mark has a tendency to portray the disciples less favorably than Matthew and Luke.

a. Example: Neg. disciples

T§93: The Interpretation of the Parable of the Sower		
Matt 13:18-23	Mark 4:13-20	Luke 8:11-15
13:18 Here then the parable of the sower. 13:19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path ...	4:13 And he said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand all the parables? 4:14 The sower sows the word....	8:11 Now the parable is this....

Mark implies that the disciples do not understand Jesus (Mk 4:13), but Matthew (Matt 13:18) and Luke (Luke 8:11) omit that phrase.

b. Example: Neg. disciples

T§113: Walking on the Water	
Matt 14:22-33	Mark 6:45-52
²² Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. ²³ And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴ but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. ²⁵ And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea.	⁵ Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. ⁴⁶ After saying farewell to them, he went up on the mountain to pray. ⁴⁷ When evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. ⁴⁸ When he saw that they were straining at the oars against an adverse wind, he came towards them early in the morning, walking on the sea. He intended to pass them by.

T§113: Walking on the Water	
Matt 14:22-33	Mark 6:45-52
<p>²⁶ But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. ²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."</p> <p>²⁸ Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." ²⁹ He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" ³¹ Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" ³² When they got into the boat, the wind ceased.</p> <p>³³ And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."</p>	<p>⁴⁹ But when they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out; ⁵⁰ for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."</p> <p>⁵¹ Then he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased.</p> <p>And they were utterly astounded, ⁵² for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.</p>

Mark says that the disciples did not understand Jesus and their hearts were hardened (Mark 6:52). Matthew omits that verse and adds another regarding the disciples worship of Jesus (Matt. 14:33). Luke omits the account altogether.

c. Example: Neg. disciples

T§188: Jesus Blesses the Children		
Matt 19:13-15	Mark 10:13-16	Luke 18:15-17
<p>¹³ Then little children were being brought to him in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them;</p> <p>¹⁴ but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs." ¹⁵ And he laid his hands on them and went on his way.</p>	<p>¹³ People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them.</p> <p>¹⁴ But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.</p> <p>¹⁵ Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." ¹⁶ And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.</p>	<p>¹⁵ People were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they sternly ordered them not to do it.</p> <p>¹⁶ But Jesus called for them and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.</p> <p>¹⁷ Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it."</p>

d. Example: Neg. disciples

T§70: Healing the Man with the Withered Hand		
Matt. 12:9-14	Mark 3:1-6	Luke 6:6-11
<p>⁹ He left that place and entered their synagogue; ¹⁰ a man was there with a withered hand, and they asked him, "Is it lawful to cure on the sabbath?" so that they might accuse him. ¹¹ He said to them, "Suppose one of you has only one sheep and it falls into a pit on the sabbath; will you not lay hold of it and lift it out?" ¹² How much more valuable is a human being than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the sabbath." ¹³ Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and it was restored, as sound as the other. ¹⁴ But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.</p>	<p>¹ Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. ² They watched him to see whether he would cure him on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him. ³ And he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come forward." ⁴ Then he said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. ⁵ He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. ⁶ The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.</p>	<p>⁶ On another sabbath he entered the synagogue and taught, and there was a man there whose right hand was withered. ⁷ The scribes and the Pharisees watched him to see whether he would cure on the sabbath, so that they might find an accusation against him. ⁸ Even though he knew what they were thinking, he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come and stand here." He got up and stood there. ⁹ Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to destroy it?" ¹⁰ After looking around at all of them, he said to him, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and his hand was restored. ¹¹ But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.</p>

Other examples:

(e) Mark says that Jesus' mother and brothers tried to seize Jesus because they thought he was insane (*exestē*) (Mark 6:20-21), but is omitted by Luke and Matthew.

(f) Mark says that the Spirit "drove" (*ekballō*) Jesus into the desert (Mark 1:12), whereas Matthew and Luke says the Spirit "led" Jesus into the desert (Mt. 4:1; Lk 4:1).

The point is: The difficult readings in Mark—not found in Matthew or Luke—suggest that Matthew and Luke used Mark, but changed Mark's "difficult reading" to "easier readings" or left the difficult readings out entirely.

D. Fourth: Verbal agreement and order

Claim: Matthew did not know Luke, nor vice versa, but both know Mark.

Assumption: If person A and B are independently copying from person C, person A and B will follow B, but on occasion change B's order but in different ways. And that is what we find overwhelmingly.

Evidence:

Concerning the words used in parallel passages (triple tradition),

- Matthew, Mark, and Luke have many agreements.
- At times, Matthew and Mark agree against Luke,
- At other times, Luke and Mark agree against Matthew.
- However, Matthew and Luke rarely agree against Mark.
- This suggests that Matthew and Luke borrowed from Mark.

Concerning the order of pericopes,

- Matthew and Luke never agree against Mark in the order of material.
- Matthew and Luke occasionally deviate from Mark's order, but never together.
- This suggest that Matt and Lk followed Mark, but did not

E. Fifth: Redactions

Claim: Matthew and Luke seems to edit or correct (redact) Mark

Assumption: The Gospel with the more “mistakes” is earlier Gospel.

Evidence: There appear to be corrections and theological additions in Matthew and Luke.

1. Corrections

T#69: Plucking Heads of Grain on the Sabbath

Matt 12:1-8	Mark 2:23-28	Luke 6:1-5
<p>12:1 At that time Jesus went <u>through the grainfields</u> on the sabbath; <u>his disciples</u> were hungry, and they <u>began to pluck heads of grain</u> and to eat. 12:2 But when <u>the Pharisees</u> saw it, they <u>said to him</u>, "Look, your disciples are <u>doing what is not lawful</u> to do on the sabbath." 12:3 He <u>said to them</u>, "Have you not read what David did, when he was <u>hungry</u>, and those who were <u>with him</u>: 12:4 <u>how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?</u> 12:5 Or have you not read in the law how on the sabbath the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are guiltless? 12:6 I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. 12:7 And if you had known what this means, I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. 12:8 <u>For the Son of man is lord of the sabbath.</u>"</p>	<p>2:23 One <u>sabbath he was going through the grainfields</u>; and as they made their way <u>his disciples began to pluck heads of grain</u>. 2:24 And <u>the Pharisees said to him</u>, "Look, why are they <u>doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?</u>" 2:25 And <u>he said to them</u>, "Have you <u>never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry</u>, he and those who were <u>with him</u>: 2:26 <u>how he entered the house of God, when Abi'athar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?</u>" 2:27 <u>And he said to them, "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath;</u> 2:28 <u>so the Son of man is lord even of the sabbath.</u>"</p> <p><i>Who was the high priest at that time? See 1 Sam 21:1.</i></p>	<p>6:1 On a <u>sabbath</u>, while <u>he was going through the grainfields</u>, <u>his disciples</u> plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands. 6:2 But some of <u>the Pharisees said</u>, "<u>Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the sabbath?</u>" 6:3 And Jesus answered, "<u>Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him</u>: 6:4 <u>how he entered the house of God, and took and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those with him?</u>" 6:5 <u>And he said to them, "The Son of man is lord of the sabbath."</u></p>

(a) What do we *observe*? What are some of the obvious differences?

Matthew is longer, has added material; Mark added phrases in grey highlight.

(b) Is it the same account?

It appears to be the same event.

(c) How do we explain the differences, if it is the same account?

Matt/Luke felt free to omit elements of Mk 2:26-7 OR Mark felt free to add vv. 26-27.

The phrase "when Abiathar was high priest" is inaccurate (Mk 2:26). The high priest was Ahimelech when David took this action (1 Sam 21:1). This is probably why Matthew and Luke do not include it--they corrected Mark.

2. Matthew's Theological additions

For example, Matthew seems to add theological features not in Mark or Luke.

Matthew uses the title “Son of David” eleven times,⁷ but only four have parallels in Mark and Luke.⁸

Matt 12:9 gives Jesus the title, “Son of David,” but Mark and Luke omit it.

If Matthew was prior, why would Mark or Luke omit the phrase “Son of David”? It is more likely that Matthew added it to his Markan source.

F. Sixth: Primitive theology

Claim: Luke and Matthew have a “higher Christology” and a more “advanced ecclesiology” than Mark.

Assumption: The theology (understanding) about Jesus and the church grew (expanded, elaborated) over time.

Evidence:

The tendency overtime was to use the title "Lord" more and more for Jesus. Matthew uses that title of Jesus more than Mark. For example:

- In Matthew, Peter addresses Jesus as "Lord" (Mt 17:15), but in parallel accounts, Peter calls Jesus "teacher" (Mk 9:17; Lk 9:38).
- It is unlikely that Mark would have changed Matthew's title of "Lord" to a less exalted title like "teacher."
- Hence, Mark must be prior to Matthew.

G. Conclusion

The cumulative evidence of the arguments above strongly supports the belief that Mark was prior to Matthew and Luke, and that both Luke and Matthew used Mark to write their gospels.

The question becomes what about the material that Luke and Matthew share in common that is not found in Mark? To that question we now turn and the “Q-Hypothesis.”

⁷Matthew 1:1, 20; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30, 31; 21:9, 15; 22:42, 45.

⁸Mark 10:47, 48; 12:35, 37; Lk 18:38, 39; 20:41, 44.