

- Today's discussion will focus on the first three gospels - Matthew, Mark and Luke
- These gospels show a considerable overlap in materials.
 - Not just reporting the same events, but telling it in the same form.
 - The charts show the number of verses (approximately) shared between these "synoptic" gospels
 - 50% of synoptic material is shared between more than one gospel.
 - Over half of Mark is shared with Luke, and over three quarters with Matthew
 - Only 2% of the synoptic material is uniquely found in Mark
 - Nearly one fifth of the material is unique to Matthew and nearly one third to Luke
 - A portion of material just less than half the size of Mark's gospel is shared only by Matthew and Luke

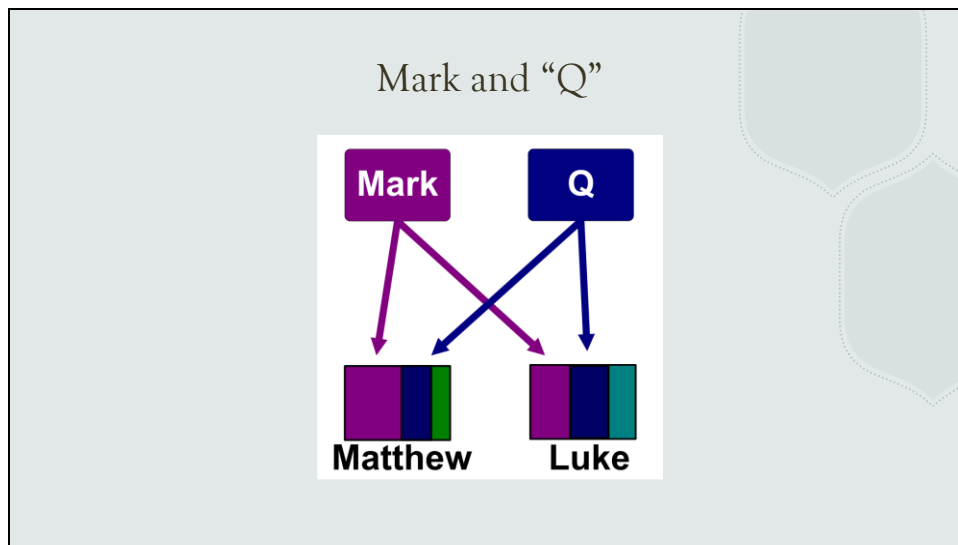
Similar Material – The Feeding of the 5000		
<p>Matthew 14:15-20 ESV 15 Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away..."</p> <p>16 But Jesus said, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." ...</p> <p>19 Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass,</p> <p>and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing.</p> <p>Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds</p> <p>20 And they all ate and were satisfied.</p>	<p>Mark 6:35-42 ESV 35 And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. 36 Send them away..."</p> <p>37 But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." ...</p> <p>39 Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. 40 So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties.</p> <p>41 And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing</p> <p>and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people...</p> <p>42 And they all ate and were satisfied.</p>	<p>Luke 9:12-17 ESV 12 Now the day began to wear away, and the twelve came and said to him, "Send the crowd away... for we are here in a desolate place."</p> <p>13 But he said to them, "You give them something to eat." ...</p> <p>14... And he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each." 15 And they did so, and had them all sit down.</p> <p>16 And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing over them.</p> <p>Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd.</p> <p>17 And they all ate and were satisfied.</p>

- Sometimes the common material has identical language, but other times it can be very different.

How did this happen?



- The simple answer is "we don't know", at least not for sure. But by carefully considering the internal evidence (comparing the similarities and the differences), we can make a compelling theory.
- Did the Holy Spirit inspire the three authors to write the same words?
 - While this is certainly possible, we have no revelation from God telling us this. Therefore, we would be more reasonable to ask if a natural answer can explain this problem first, before jumping to a supernatural explanation. After all, natural means are just the way in which God "usually" works; supernatural means are the exception.
- Did the authors copy each other?
 - Maybe! There is good reason to think that this is part of the explanation. But it does not explain all the similarities and differences which we see.
 - Studies have suggested that there is both written and oral sources underlying the gospels.
- "Source criticism" is the name of a method which tries to identify what sources were used by a piece of writing. It is this method which helps us to study the origin of the gospels and arrive at a good explanation?
 - It should be remembered that we have no historical testimony explaining how the synoptic gospels came to be so similar. Therefore, our best theories require a lot of subjective interpretation. There are many ideas out there, but we will discuss one of the most popular theories.

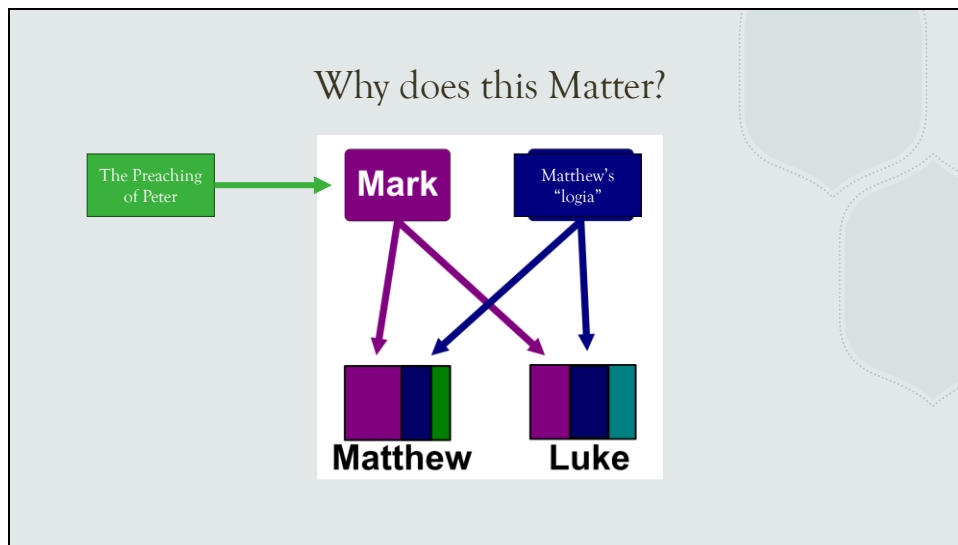


- Many people believe Mark was the first gospel written, and that Matthew and Luke used this when they wrote their gospels
 - Mark has the least unique material, as mentioned previously. Most of Mark appears elsewhere.
 - Some people have suggested that Mark was an "abridgement" of Matthew, but when we look at the details, Matthew tends to abridge Mark on a passage-by-passage basis. Mark has fuller accounts with more details.
 - Mark tends to establish the order of passages. Matthew and Mark sometimes agree against Luke. Mark and Luke sometimes agree against Matthew. But Matthew never agrees with Luke against Mark.
- But why do Matthew and Luke share material that is not found in Mark?
 - People have suggested that they also used another written source, which has been called Q.
 - This common material is particularly full of the sayings of Jesus (while Mark is particularly full of the works of Jesus).

What language did Jesus speak?



- Historical evidence suggests that Jesus was probably trilingual, speaking Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek.
 - It is likely that his everyday language was Aramaic (this was the common language of Palestine at that time)
 - But the gospels we have were written in Greek.
- Linguistic study has found evidence that much of the material in Mark and Q were originally in Aramaic
 - Some of the grammar is distinctly "semitic"
 - Some of the Lord's teaching can be shown to be more poetic when translated back into Aramaic.
 - Some of the differences between the gospels can be explained as different translations of Jesus words into Greek.



Legendary material?

If the gospels are just a compilation of previous material, does that mean we can't trust them as reliable history?

Are the gospels stories just the result of many retellings?

But all the accounts give a remarkable consistent characterization of Jesus.

Does the theory fit external testimony?

The evidence of Aramaic languages underpinning the gospels fits the contemporary culture in which Jesus lived.

If Mark recorded Peter's preaching, this makes sense why Matthew and Luke would want to use it as a basis.

The tradition that Matthew wrote the "oracles" (logia/sayings) of Jesus in the "Hebrew" (or Aramaic) dialect, coincides with this idea of Q.

While far from certain, it appears that there is an interesting corroboration between the external and internal evidence.