

What is the “Synoptic Problem”?

Lets Summarize!

Last week we . . .

- Introduced the “Synoptic Problem”
 - What does “synopsis” mean?
 - What is a *Synopsis of the Four Gospels*?
 - Why are Matt, Mark, Luke called the “Synoptic Gospels”?
- We discussed how eyewitness recollections can look. Differences are natural.

- Some reasons for the differences:
 - Remembered differently
 - Paraphrased
 - Abbreviated for economy
 - Expanded for clarity
 - Translation
 - We saw how literal English translations render the Greek text differently.
 - Jesus mainly spoke in Aramaic while His words are reported in Greek.
- Therefore, striking similarities are not expected and need explanation.

- 4 observations that suggest a relationship exists between some of the Gospels:
 - Verbal Similarities
 - More than 60 words nearly verbatim

Matthew 3:7-10

“Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Therefore, produce fruit worthy of repentance. And do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. And now the axe is laid at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree not producing good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

Luke 3:7-9

“Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Therefore, produce **fruit worthy** of repentance. And do not **begin** to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. And **even** now the axe is laid at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree not producing good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

Differences

Matthew

- “fruit worthy” (sing)
- “And now”
- 63 words

Luke

- “fruit worthy” (pl)
- “And even now”
- 64 words

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 - Similar Order

Appearing in all 3 Synoptics

1. Peter's confession
2. Jesus predicts death & resurrection
3. Jesus teaches on discipleship
4. Transfiguration
5. Coming of Elijah (*not in Luke*)
6. Jesus heals demon possessed boy
7. Jesus' predicts death again
8. Jesus' thoughts on paying Temple tax
9. Who is the greatest?
10. Anonymous exorcist (*not in Matthew*)
11. Dealing with one's sin (*Luke locates elsewhere*)

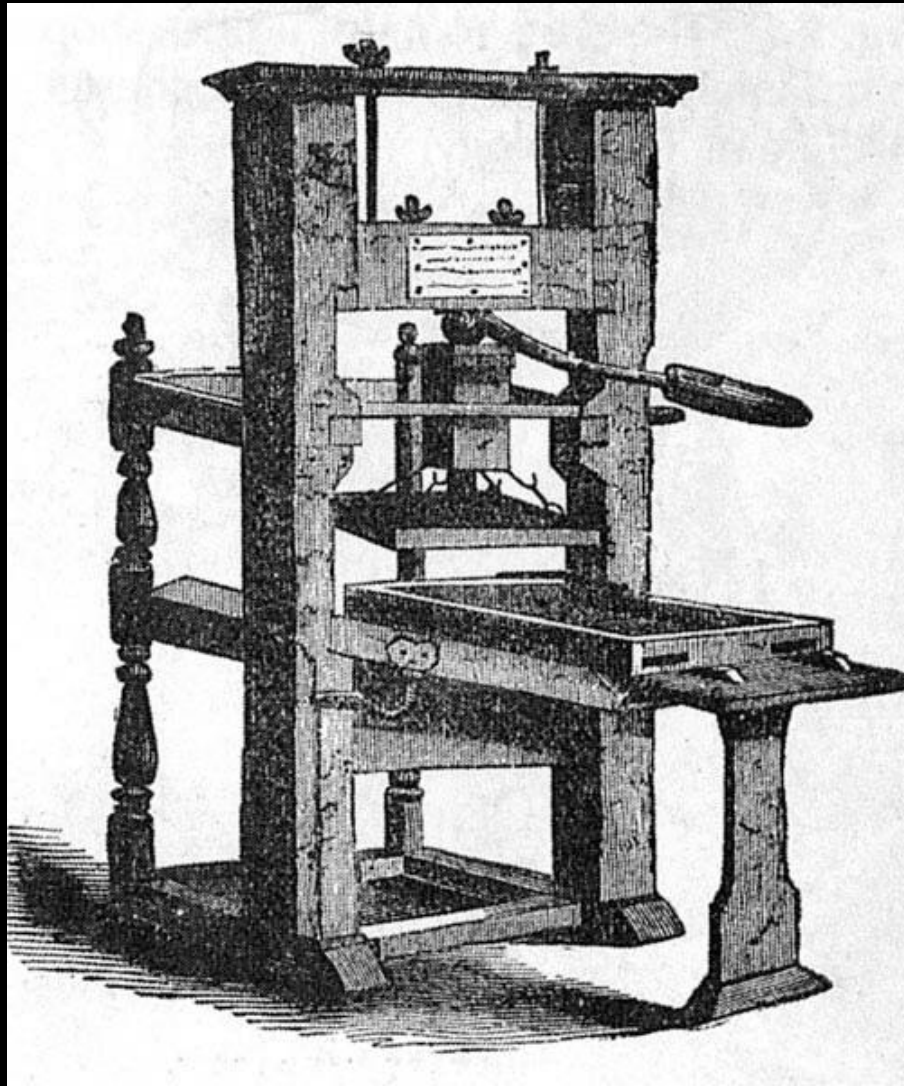
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 - Parable of the talents/minas (Matthew/Luke)
 - Clues of Literary Dependence
 - “Let the reader understand” (Matthew/Mark)

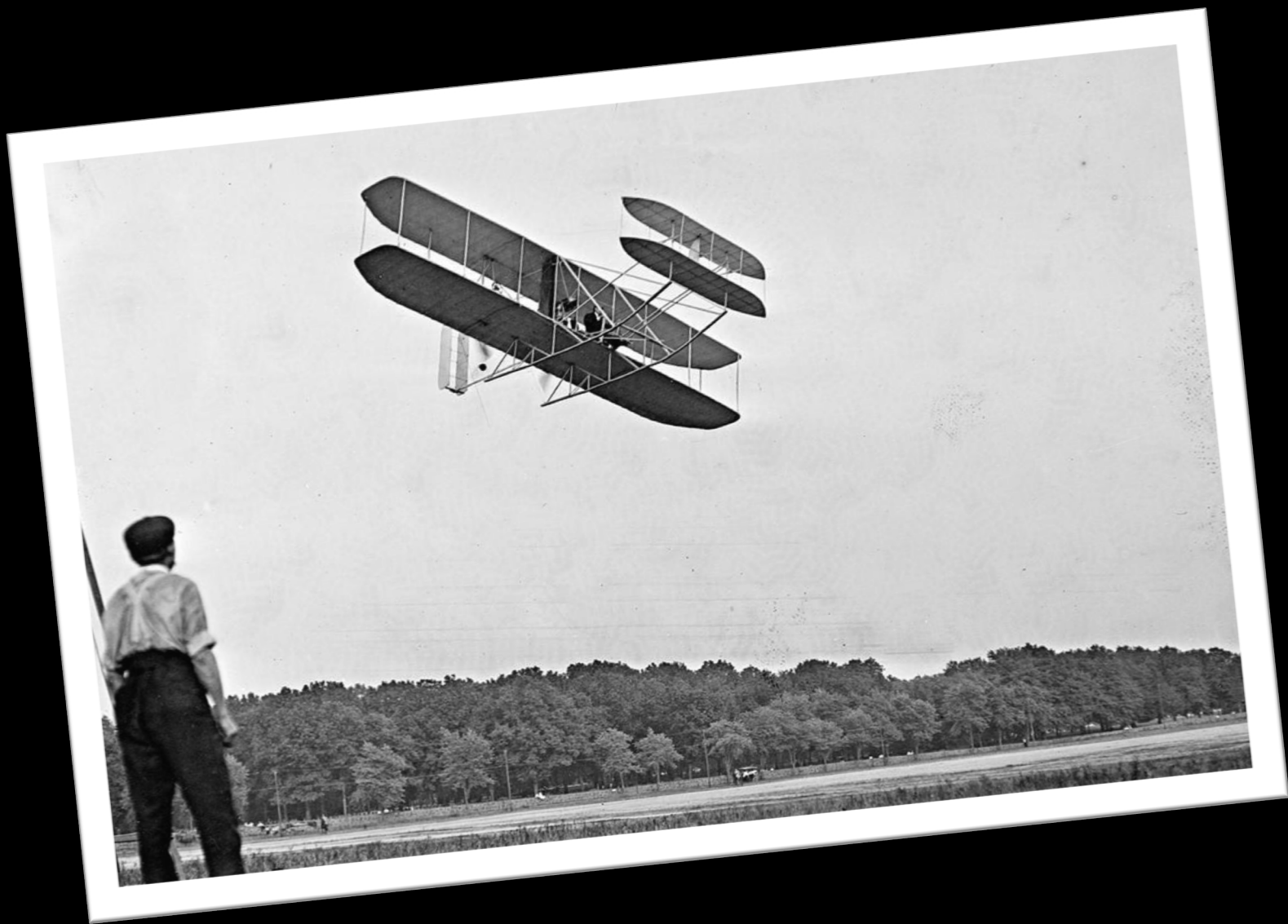
What literary relationships exist
between the Gospels?

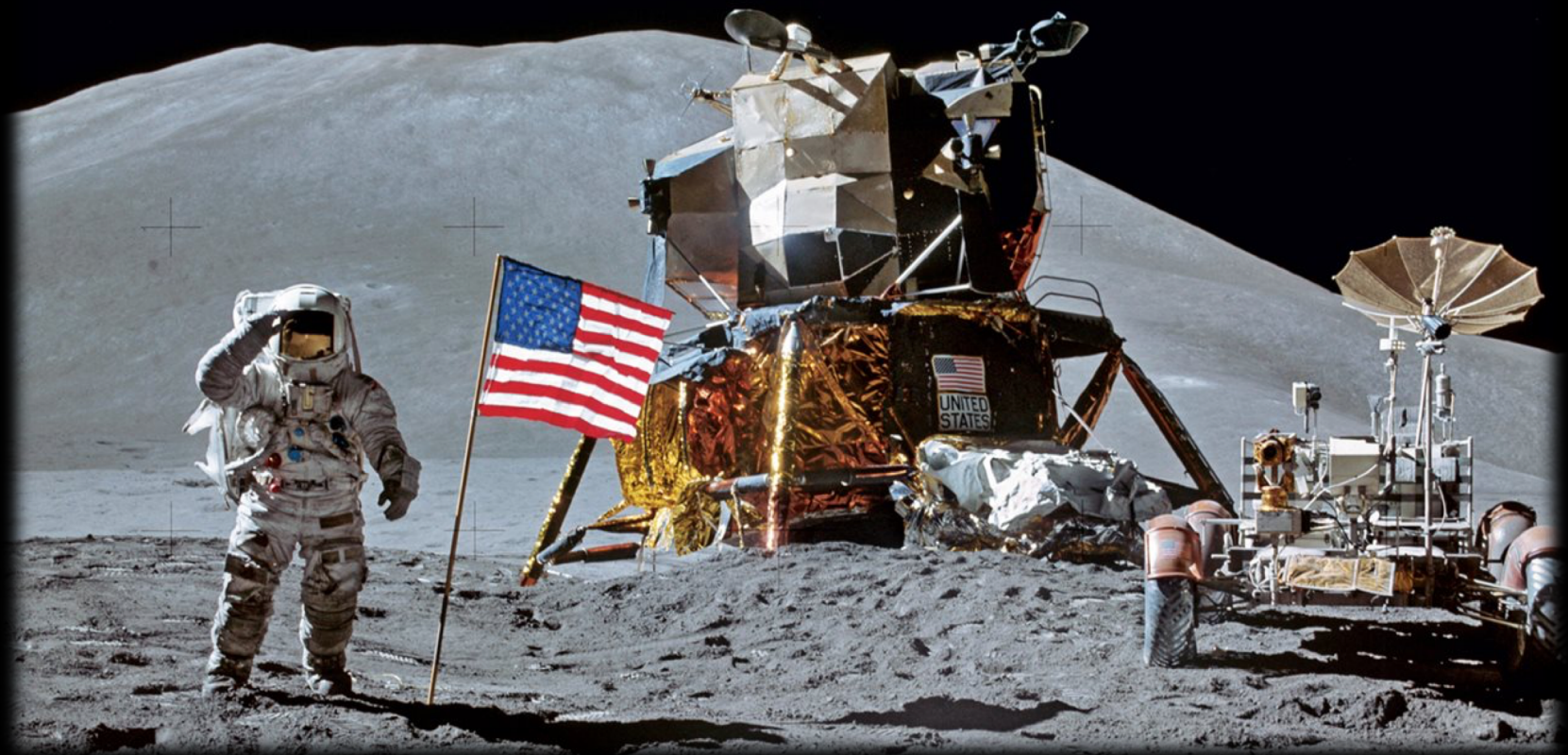














Which Gospel Came First?

Matthew?

Matthean Priority

- Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
 - *Irenaeus, Origen, Eusebius*
- Matthew, Luke, Mark, John
 - *Clement of Alexandria, Augustine*

Matthean priority was
unanimous opinion of the church

until . . .

Markan Priority

Gottlob Storr, 1786

1. Mark's cruder style

- “And immediately, the Spirit *drove* Him into the wilderness.” (Mark 1:12)
- “Then Jesus was *led up* by the Spirit into the wilderness.” (Matt 4:1)
- “Then Jesus . . . was *led* by the Spirit in the wilderness.” (Luke 4:1)

- “Nothing is hidden except that it be revealed.” (Mark 4:22)
- “nothing is hidden that will not be revealed.” (Matt 10:26 / Luke 8:17; 12:2)

2. Translation

- “Taking the hand of the child, He said to her, ‘**Talitha koum**,’ which translated means ‘Little girl. I say to you, ‘Get up!’” (Mark 5:41)
- “Taking her hand, He called, saying, ‘Child. Get up!’” (Luke 8:54)
- “He took her hand and raised the little girl.” (Matt 9:25)

- “But you say, ‘If a man says to his father or mother, “Whatever help you would have received from me is **corban** (that is, a gift [for God]) . . .”’” (Mark 7:11)
- “But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, “Whatever help you would have received from me is a gift [for God] . . .”’” (Matt 15:5)

3. Mark's Unique & Awkward Content

- 7:32-37. Jesus heals deaf man by putting fingers in his ears, spitting and touching man's tongue with his saliva.
- 8:22-25. Jesus spits on the eyes of a blind man to heal him. He gains some sight but says he sees people who look like trees walking. So, Jesus tries again and the man sees perfectly.
- 14:51-52. An anonymous young man flees naked when Jesus is arrested.

- 2:26 mentions Abiathar as the high priest when David and his men ate the consecrated bread.
 - 1 Sam 21:1-6 says Ahimelech was the high priest and 22:20 says Abiathar was Ahimelech's son.
 - Matt 12:4 and Luke 6:4 mention what David did without naming the high priest.
 - That Matt and Luke omitted this awkward content seems more likely than Mark adding it.

4. Divergence

When Matthew or Luke present a different order of events than Mark, the other usually follows Mark.

This suggests Mark precedes Matt and Luke.

5. Problems w/Matthean Priority

- Several church fathers said Matthew originally written in Hebrew
 - Papias
 - Irenaeus
 - Origen
 - Jerome
 - Augustine
 - Epiphanius

Problems

- All mss of Matthew in Greek
- Matthew not read like translation Greek
- Papias is earliest source claiming Matthew wrote in Hebrew . . .

“Therefore, Matthew, on the one hand,
arranged the teachings/sayings (*ta logia*)
in the Hebrew language
but each translated them as he was able.”

Fragments of Papias 3:16

Q Source Material

- Content common to Matt & Luke, almost exclusively Jesus' teachings
- In 1863, H J Holtzmann introduced the idea that Matt & Luke had used a common source.
- Later, the German word *Quelle* (source) was abbrev "Q" as name of hypothetical source

Plausible Scenario

- First: Matthew composed doc containing many of Jesus' teachings in Hebrew/Aramaic. Later translated to Greek. Q source.
- Next: Mark first to compose a full narrative of Jesus' life & teachings
- Then: Matthew (or someone under his direction) used Mark as primary source, supplemented it with Q & other sources

Why is this important?

Nature of Divine Inspiration

- Divine Inspiration sometimes involved the author using sources
- Divine Inspiration did not involve dictation
 - Mark's crude readings
 - "I can do better than that!" – *God*
 - Editorial fatigue
 - "Oh, heavens! How did I miss that?" – *God*
- Divine Inspiration process includes a human element

Was Luke using Matt or vice versa?

- Probably not
 - While Matt & Luke use Jesus' sayings & narrative in Mark, Q material is mostly Jesus' sayings and very little narrative
 - Matt & Luke almost always place Q material in different locations