

BI 611 The Synoptic Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles

Objectives

The successful learner will:

1. Explore, theologically open and spiritually appreciate the diversities of the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of Mark the Gospel of Luke; and the Book of Acts within the context of their message for salvation
2. Discover the style and unique purpose of the these three Gospels
3. Realize the utmost significance of the Acts of the Apostles in understanding the development of the church, its liturgy and its teaching on divine revelation
4. Understand a deeper meaning to several key passages in each Gospel
5. Develop a better understanding of the direct relationship between the Old and the New Testament fulfilling the messianic message of Jesus and the Son of God
6. Broaden your knowledge of the development of the evangelization of the church and the missionary work of the early Disciples of Jesus

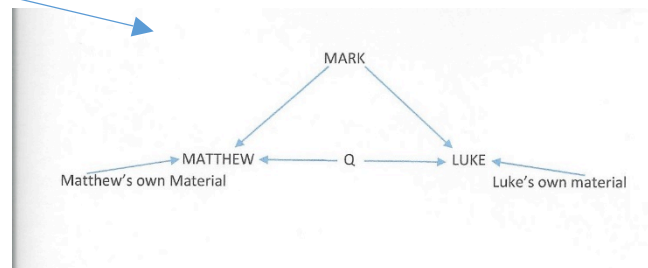
Introduction

Welcome to the study of the Synoptic Gospels and the Book of Acts. There is certainly a lot of material to cover, and an in-depth study cannot be accomplished for each book. However, we will study the Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke as foundational witnesses to Jesus' life, death and Resurrection by looking at their independence and interdependence. The Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke are called the Synoptic Gospels because of their similarities. The Gospel of John is not included in this description because his material does not appear to have been formulated by using Mark as his main source. The term synoptic is derived from a combination of the Greek words *συν* (syn = together) and *οψις* (opsis = seeing)¹ to indicate that the contents of these three Gospels can be viewed side by side.

The module lessons are presented following what most scholars perceive to be the written order. Since Mark is believed to be the first written Gospel, it will be covered first, followed by Matthew and then Luke. It will then be easier to see the Synoptic scenario as we proceed. We can recognize that Matthew and Luke must have had a copy of Mark, which they used as the source for their writings. As we look at Matthew's use of Mark we must also recognize that Matthew incorporated his own material into his Gospel, which he felt was necessary for the audience for whom he was writing. We can also assert that Luke did likewise for the nature and objective of his task. But something must be added to this equation: there are more than 200 similar verses that appear only in Matthew and Luke. This would indicate that there must be an additional source, which we will call Q, from the German word *Quelle*.

The two source view, in this diagram, illustrates the extensive use of Mark by Matthew and Luke. The additional source, Q, was a collection of sayings of Jesus². See Diagram

Each of these Gospels will be presented in a three-module format. An outline has been provided for each module. These are listed in the module sections and have been included to assist you in understanding what we are covering in that



¹ (Heil & Verheyden, 2005)

² (Dugan, 1999)

particular week.

Each module will list objectives, a commentary of the material to be covered and questions for thought. Each of these Gospels presents a unique or parallel view of the beginning, infancy narrative, Galilean ministry, Passion and death story, Resurrection, and appearances. It will be my job to alert you to the sections of each Gospel that are stand-alone; share with another Gospel, either from the source of Mark or Q; or are contained in all three. Since there are many passages that fall into these categories, those that seem reflective for the task at hand have been chosen and will bring to light additional material as necessary to further explain or clarify the objective.

In addition to our Synoptic Gospel study, the last three modules will cover the Acts of the Apostles, which is the second volume of Luke’s Gospel. *The Acts of the Apostles* takes into account the church after the death of Jesus. It is extremely important for us to view the early development of the church and the great missionary work of the apostles as well as St. Paul.

Each module currently contains one forum question. Additional short- answer forum questions may be added as we move through the material. As in all the courses at the Josephinum Diaconate Institute, we will have several conference calls, which will be listed on the top of the page.

Required Texts

There are two texts listed for this course: the *Collegeville Bible Commentary of the New Testament*, published by the Liturgical Press; and *Gospel Parallels: A Synopsis of the First Three Gospels* by Burton H. Throckmorton Jr., published by Thomas Nelson Publishers. We will also be reading the Second Vatican Council’s Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*), an English translation of which may be accessed from the Vatican website:

http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html

If you are able to locate a copy, the instructor will be using Austin Flannery’s translation of this document (*Vatican Council II*, Northport: Costello, 1996), but the Vatican translation is fine too.

The chart below is a breakdown of the synoptically connected sections mentioned above.

Section of Scripture	Mark	Matthew	Luke	Synoptic Description
Beginning Narrative	<u>Mark</u> Chapter 1:1-6	<u>Matthew</u> Chapter 1 ^a	<u>Luke</u> Chapter 1:1-4	<u>Mark</u> states that Jesus is the “Son of God”, <u>Matthew</u> says that Jesus is the “Christ” <u>Luke</u> says that Jesus is the “Word”
Infancy Narrative	None	Chapter 1 & 2	Chapter 1 & 2	<u>Mark</u> lacks an infancy narrative, beginning instead with John the Baptist’s preparation of the people for the one who is to come. <u>Matthew</u> , after the genealogy, gives us the birth of Jesus, the visit of the wise men and the flight to Egypt. <u>Luke</u> , develops a vivid story including three beautiful scripture passages which we recite in the Hours. Notice the writing of the gospels allowed each of the followers to increase and develop the story more thoroughly.
Galilean Ministry	Chapter 1:15- 8:21	Chapter 4:12- 16:12	Chapter 4:1-9:17	The Galilean Ministry of Jesus is covered quite well by all three gospels in the mentioned sections. With <u>Mark</u> as the main source, we will begin to see the incorporation of “Q” into <u>Matthew</u> and <u>Luke</u> and their own personal material scattered throughout this section.

Journey Narrative	Chapter 8:22-10:52	Chapter 16:13-20:34	Chapter 9:18-19:26	<u>Mark</u> frames Jesus' journey to Jerusalem with two stories of Jesus healing blind men. These stories symbolically highlight his efforts to cure his disciples' spiritual blindness throughout the journey. <u>Matthew</u> expands Mark's journey narrative with additional teaching concerning discipleship. <u>Luke</u> concentrates Jesus' parables in the journey narrative.
Jerusalem Narrative	Chapter 11:1-13:37	Chapter 21:1-25:46	Chapter 19:28 – 22:28	This section of the synoptic gospels is probably the most unified. Many of the passages are word for word, giving reassurance to Mark's account, which is verified by <u>Matthew</u> and <u>Luke</u> .
Passion Narrative	Chapter 14-15:25	Chapter 26:21-26:29	Chapter 22:39 – 23:25	This section also contributes to the synoptic correlation among the three; however, you will notice that <u>Luke</u> adds 27 of his own verses.
Crucifixion Narrative	Chapter 15:26 – 16:8	Chapter 26:30 – 28:10	Chapter 23:26-49 -24:12	From here to the passage describing the empty tomb, the similarities continue in <u>Mark</u> , <u>Matthew</u> and <u>Luke</u> .
Appearance Narrative	None	Chapter 28:11-20	Chapter 24:13-53	<u>Mark</u> Scripture scholars have indicated that a longer ending has been added to <u>Mark</u> . Mk 16:9-20. In this account Mary Magdalene alone sees Jesus. <u>Mark's</u> original ending lacks an appearance, concluding instead with a proclamation of Christ's resurrection and the promise that he will be seen in Galilee. <u>Matthew's</u> account begins with Mary Magdalene and the others seeing two men in dazzling apparel that tell them Jesus has risen. <u>Matthew's</u> account also mentions the guards retelling all that had happened next. Finally, Jesus appears to the disciples, before commissioning them. <u>Luke's</u> recounts the same appearance as <u>Matthew</u> does almost word for word. This is followed by Emmaus. After this story, Jesus appears to the disciples. Then he leads the out for the ascension. However, the real ending for <u>Luke</u> is the Acts of the Apostles. One final note: It seems likely that <u>Matthew</u> and <u>Luke</u> used "Q:" as their source since evidence of <u>Mark's</u> ending was added some time later.

Bibliography:

Campbell, D. *The Synoptic Gospels: A Commentary*. The Seabury Press, 1969.

Dugan, D. L. *A History of the Synoptic Problem*. Doubleday, 1999.

Heil , C., & Verheyden, J. *The Sayings of Q: Collected Essays*. Bibliotheca Ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium, Vol. 189, pp. 163-164, 2005.