



READING RESPONSIBLY

Correctly Handling the Word of Truth

LESSON 07: GOSPELS

Ancient Biographies

I. Introduction

Read Matt 5:3 and Luke 6:20. Who exactly is blessed? What words did Jesus say?

→ [Read Matthew 5:3](#)

*Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

→ [Read Luke 6:20](#)

*Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.*

Comparison

→ [Matthew 5:3](#)

*Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

→ [Luke 6:20](#)

*Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.*

- So either
 - Jesus preached two similar sermons
 - One or both writers got it wrong.
 - Both writers have their own inspired lenses, filters, themes, and purposes.

II. Overview of Genre & Context: Gospels

- Author/Time
 - Authorship headings ("according to Matthew," etc.) not in original text.
 - Written ~AD 65-95.
 - ~30 years between death/resurrection and earliest gospel accounts.
- Purposes
 - "...so that [Theophilus] may know the certainty of the things [he has] been taught (Luke 1:4).

- “these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31).

III. Big Issues

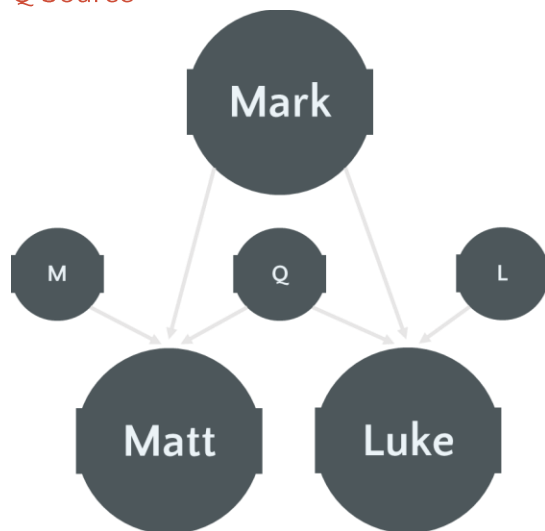
A. Sources

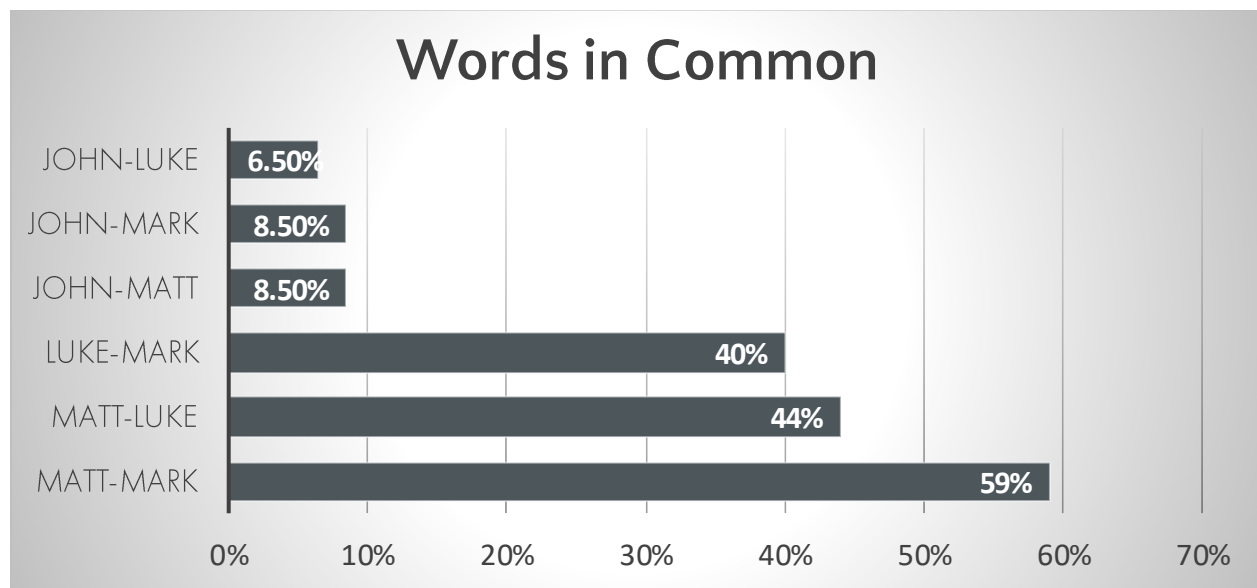
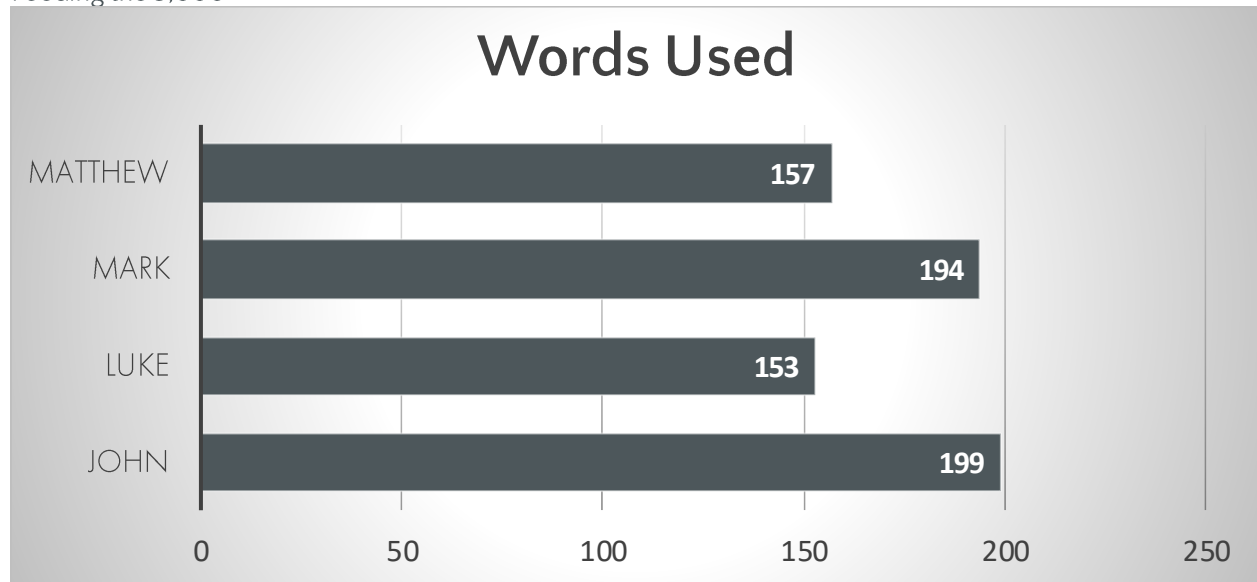
→ [Read Luke 1:1-4](#)

¹ Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, ² just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. ³ With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

- Inspiration
- Other written accounts
- Eyewitnesses
- Oral tradition

Q Source





B. Ancient Biographies (from Mark Alan Powell)

- No pretense or goal of detached objectivity
- Little attention to historical data (names, dates, places)
- Little attention to chronology of events or development of the subject's thought
- No psychological interest in the subject's inner motivations
- Anecdotal style of narration
- Emphasis on the subject's character and defining traits
- Consistent focus on the subject's philosophy of life
- Strong interest in the subject's death, as consistent with philosophy of life
- Presentation of the subject as a model worthy of emulation
- Depiction of subject as superior to competitors or rivals
- Overall concern with the subject's legacy, evident in followers who carry on the tradition

IV. Specific Examples

A. Luke and Harmony of the Gospels

B. Luke's Perspective

1. Purposes

- To help **Theophilus** feel **more certain** about the things he has been **taught**
 - "so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught" (1:1)
- To show that **Jesus is the fulfillment of God's plan**; he is the promised Messiah
- To show that Jesus is the savior of all people
- To show the Roman Empire that Christianity is not a threat to their social order
 - Christians are not going to rise up against them, so the Romans should quit persecuting them.

2. Content

- "Orderly" (1:3) ≠ chronological
 - Could mean "arranged by themes"

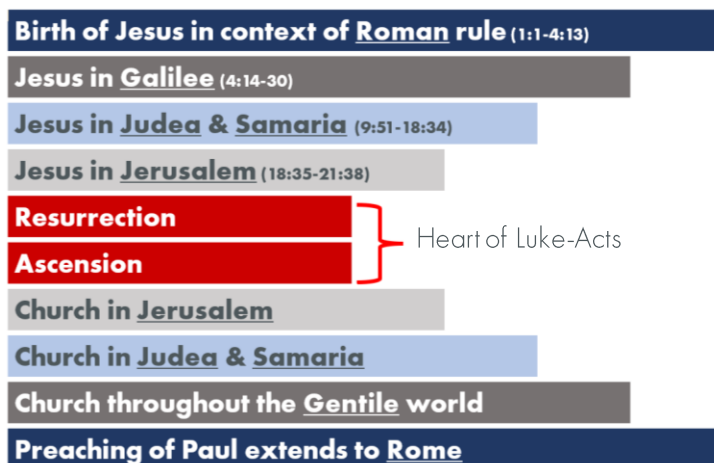


Chart adapted from Craig Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels*

3. Themes

a. Jesus is the savior of *all*, not just a special few.

Samaritans and Gentiles

- Good Samaritan (10:25-37)
- Samaritan leper (17:11-19)
- Gentiles at feast (14:23)

Tax Collectors and Sinners

- A sinner comes home (15:11-32)
- "Tax collectors and sinners" repeatedly come to hear Jesus
- Tax collectors are heroes (18:9-14; 19:1-10)

Women

- Birth stories from women's perspectives (chs 1-2)
- Prophetess Anna alongside Simeon (2:25-28)
- Men and women in leading roles in parables (15:3-10)

- Jesus affirms woman who anoints him (7:36-50)
- Jesus' ministry funded by women (8:1-3)

The Poor

- "Blessed are the poor" (6:20)
- "proclaim the good news to the poor" (4:18).
- People who are unable to help themselves (14:7-24).
- Rich man and Lazarus: poor beggar is hero (16:19-31).

b. Jesus changes everything

→ Read Luke 1:52-53

*⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.*

*⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.*

V. Reading the Gospels Responsibly: Strategies/Encouragement

A. Compare, but don't compile.

B. Learn about the social context.

- Jews vs. Romans
- Jews vs. Samaritans
- Jewish sects: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots

VI. Next Lesson: Letters

Question: Read Titus 1:6-8 and 1:12-13. Are the Cretan elders-to-be liars, evil brutes, and lazy gluttons, or blameless, upright, holy, and disciplined?