

The Synoptic Problem



THAT STRANGE SOUNDING WORD...

1 MATTHEW 2 MARK:

TO: JEWS

TO: ROMANS

AS: KING

AS: SERVANT

WHAT

HE: SAID

WHAT

DID

3 LUKE

TO: GREEKS

AS: GOD MAN

WHAT

HE: FELT

SYNOPTIC:
"TO SEE TOGETHER"

"TO
SEE
TOGETHER"

THE SYNOPTICS: "TO SEE TOGETHER"

51a

1 MATTHEW

TO: JEWS

AS: KING

WHAT HE: SAID

2 MARK

TO: ROMANS

AS: SERVANT

WHAT HE: DID

3 LUKE

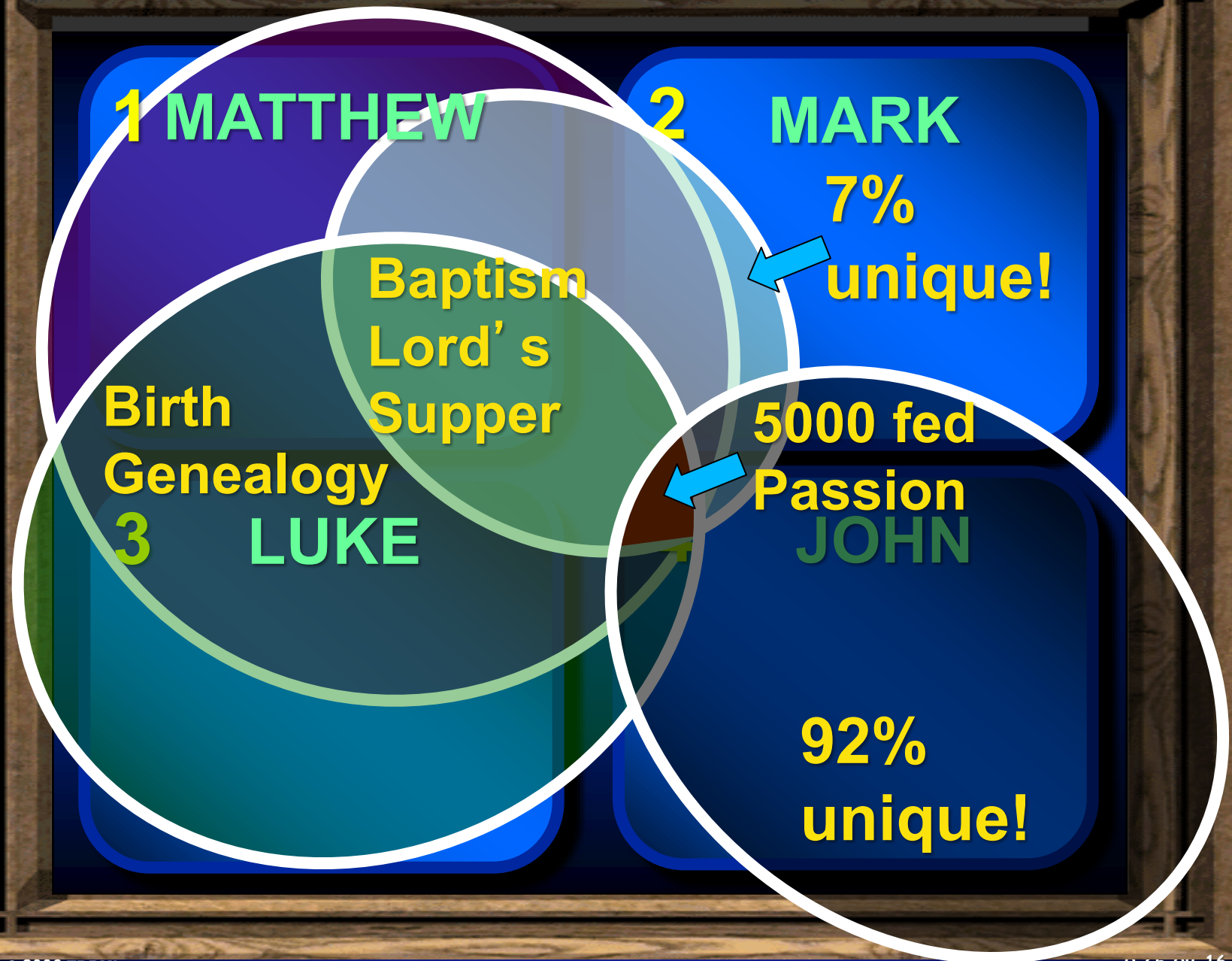
TO: GREEKS

AS: GOD/MAN

WHAT HE: FELT

JOHN
Σ

OVERLAPS IN THE GOSPELS



JOHN: SUMMING UP THE MESSAGE

MATTHEW

TO: JEWES

AS: KING
WHAT HE: SAID

MARK

TO: ROMANS

AS: SERVANT
WHAT HE: DID

LUKE

TO: GREEKS

AS: GOD-MAN
WHAT HE: FELT

Σ 4

JOHN

TO: CHURCH

AS: GOD
WHAT HE: MEANT

The Synoptic Problem

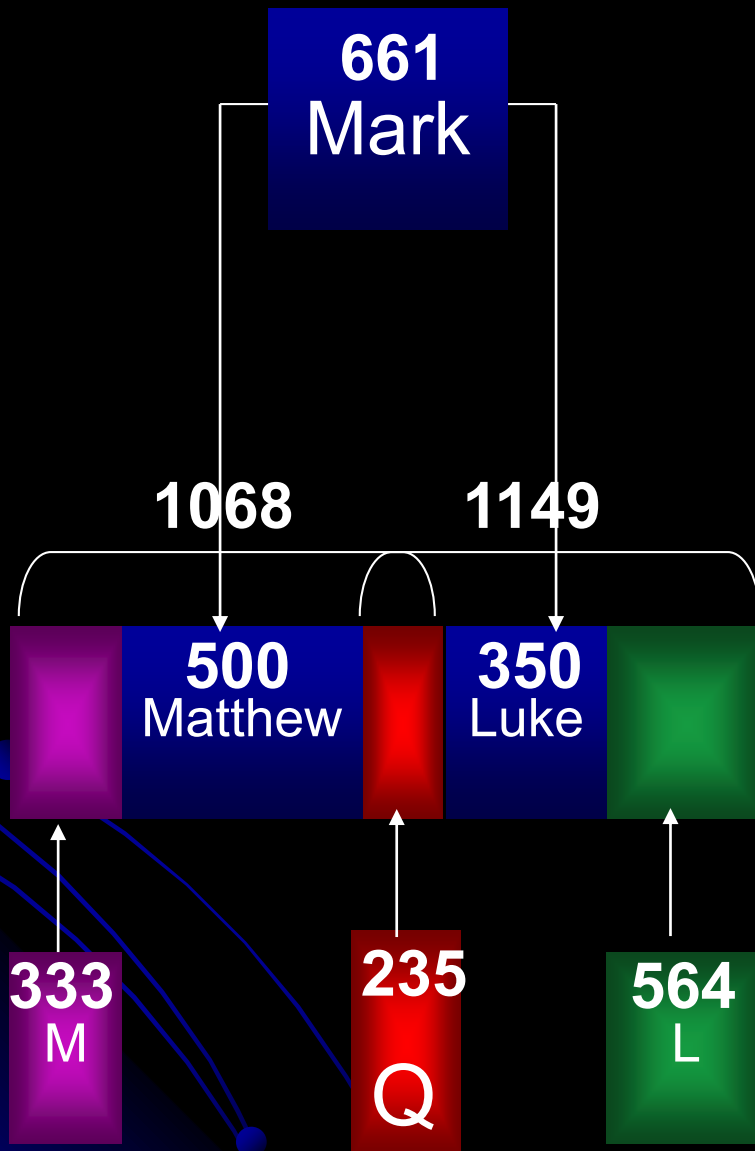


- Matthew, Mark & Luke in a nutshell:
 - How do we explain their **similarities**?
 - How do we explain their **differences**?

Synoptic Similarities

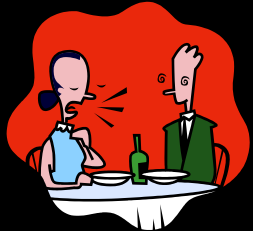
NIV Study Bible, 1471

- **Matthew, Mark and Luke are noticeably similar, while John is quite different.**
- **How do the first three Gospels agree?**
 - Language
 - Material they include
 - General order of the events and sayings from Christ's life
- **The math facts:**
 - 91 percent of Mark is found in Matthew
 - 53 percent of Mark is found in Luke
- **Such agreement raises questions as to the origin of the Synoptic Gospels. Did the authors rely on a common source? Were they interdependent?**



Marcan Priority Diagrammed

Numbers
indicate the
verses in each
proposed
source



Dating the Synoptic Gospels

Adapted from the *NIV Study Bible*, 1431



ASSUMPTION A:

Matthew and Luke used Mark as a source

♥ View #1

Mark written in the 50s or early 60s

(1) Matthew written in late 50s or the 60s

(2) Luke written 59-63

♥ View #2

Mark written 65-70

(1) Matthew written in the 70s

(2) Luke written in the 70s

ASSUMPTION B:

Matthew and Luke did not use Mark as a source

♥ View #1

Mark could have been written anytime between 50 and 70

♥ View #2

Mark written 65-70

(1) Matthew written early 50s (see Matthew notes)

(2) Luke written 59-63 (see Luke notes)

Taught in this class

What's the Synoptic Verdict?



Guilty and Not Guilty

Solutions to the Synoptic Problem

Questions like these constitute what is known as the Synoptic Problem. Several solutions have been advanced:

1. *The use of **oral tradition**.* Some have thought that tradition had become so stereotyped that it provided a common source from which all the Gospel writers drew.
2. *The use of an **early Gospel**.* Some have postulated that the Synoptic authors all had access to an earlier Gospel, now lost.
3. *The use of **written fragments**.* Some have assumed that written fragments had been composed concerning various events from the life of Christ and that these were used by the Synoptic authors.
4. ***Mutual dependence**.* Some have suggested that the Synoptic writers drew from each other with the result that what they wrote was often very similar.

Solutions to the Synoptic Problem

4. *The use of **two major sources**.* The most common view currently is that Mark and a hypothetical document, called *Quelle* (German for "source") or Q, were used by Matthew and Luke as sources for most of the materials included in their Gospels.
5. *The **priority and use of Matthew**.* Another view suggests that the other two Synoptics drew from Matthew as their main source.
6. *A **combination** of most of the above.* This theory assumes that the authors of the Synoptic Gospels made use of oral tradition, written fragments, mutual dependence on other Synoptic writers or on their Gospels, and the testimony of eyewitnesses.

When I Think They Were Written...

1 MATTHEW

TO: JEWS
 AS: The KING
 WHAT: A.D. 40s
 HE: SAID

2 MARK

TO: ROMANS
 AS: A.D. SERVANT
 WHAT: 64-68
 HE: DID

3 LUKE

TO: GREEKS
 AS: A.D. GOD/MAN
 WHAT: 57-59
 HE: FELT

4 JOHN

TO: CHURCH
 AS: A.D. 69
 WHAT: AFTER THE
 HE: MEANT SYNOPTICS

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