

How To Read, Study, and Understand The Bible

Review

Challenges of Reading the Bible

Purpose of the Bible

Sola Scriptura - Orthodox Doctrine

Inerrant, Infallible, & Sufficient

Theoneustos

Old Testament – Oral and Literary

Forecast

- I. Introduction to the NT
- II. Anatomy of the New Testament
- III. Timeline of Writings
- IV. Dynamics of Epistolary Literature
- V. Pauline Letters
- VI. The Gospels
- VII. History of Canonization
- VIII. Canonical Structure

Introduction to the NT

- One of the foundational promises of God, made through the prophets, was the creation of a new covenant, or testament (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36-37).
- The central component of this covenant was God's continued commitment to deal with and conquer the problem of human sinfulness

Introduction to the NT

- God's solution to sin was the horrific and atoning death of Jesus Christ on the cross and His redemptive resurrection.
- The NT records and reflects upon the life and passion of Christ, its significance in our lives, the gift of God's Spirit to His people, and the work and witness of the Church

Anatomy of the NT

- I. The Gospels (4)
 - a. Synoptic – Matt, Mk, Lk
 - b. Johannine – Gospel and writings
- II. History – Acts (1)
- III. The Epistles (21)
 - a. Pauline (7) / Deutero-Pauline (6)
 - i. To Churches
 - ii. To People – “Pastoral”
 - iii. Ordered by length
 - b. General (8)
- IV. The Apocalypse – Revelation (1)

Anatomy of the NT

- All 27 canonized books of our New Testament were written by the end of the 1st century/ beginning of the 2nd century AD
- However, the finalized canon, list of scriptures considered sacred, was not formally finalized until 1546 – Council of Trent/Catholics, 1559-1647 – Protestant Confessions, 1672 – Greek Orthodox

The Gospels

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

- ✓ Each provide an account of what Jesus taught and did during His life, particularly His three year public ministry, with special attention given to His suffering, death, and resurrection.
- ✓ They were written between 70-90AD
- ✓ The word “Gospel” means “Good News”
- ✓ Attributed to named authors

The Acts of the Apostles

- ✓ Written by same author as Luke
- ✓ Account of the history of Christianity from the resurrection of Jesus to Paul's imprisonment in Rome (30-62AD).
- ✓ Details: Pentecost, Peter's preaching, the growth and spread of the church, the persecution of Jewish Christians, Paul's journeys

Pauline Epistles

- ✓ 13 letters written by Paul to named city churches or individuals, written between 49-65AD
- ✓ Address growing issues or problems and show Paul's pastoral concern and his attempt to assist their growth
- ✓ Focus on knowing God, in light of His work in the OT, understanding the significance of Jesus' death and having a relationship with Him, and the role of the Spirit in overcoming our battle with sin

General Epistles

- ✓ Non-Pauline attributed letters to churches written by five individuals: Hebrew writer (Barnabas, Apollo), James (Brother of Jesus?), Peter, John, Jude
- ✓ Address a variety of topics: Christ as our High Priest, suffering as a Christian, and practical wisdom for daily Christian living
- ✓ Written between 45-90AD

The Apocalypse / Revelation

- ✓ Written by the Apostle John while exiled on Patmos (~96AD)
- ✓ In response to the reign of the Emperor Domitian who demanded to be worshipped
- ✓ Veiled imagery describing God's triumph over all evil
- ✓ Most difficult and misinterpreted book in the Bible

New Testament Timeline

Epistles: Pauline & General by 65AD

The Gospels & Acts by 90AD

Revelation 90 AD

New Testament Timeline

Why did the letters precede the Gospels?

- ✓ The early Church was focused and founded upon the person of Jesus Christ, especially His death and resurrection
- ✓ The stories of Jesus were passed on orally to converts and communities – the Gospel existed before the Gospels did

New Testament Timeline

- ✓ They read aloud from the Septuagint and believed that it was about Jesus the Messiah and interpreted it from the perspective of Christ as the fulfillment of its promises (Acts 2)
- ✓ They believed, based on the promises of Christ, that He would return within a generation (Mt 24:34, Mk 13:30, Lk 21:32)

New Testament Timeline

As a result there was no perceived need or conscious movement in the early days of Christianity to produce a new collection of sacred scriptures

Epistolary Literature

Epistolary Literature

- The New Testament contains 21 letters gathered into two main collections:
 - Pauline (Romans through Philemon)
 - Non-Pauline/General (Hebrews through Jude)
- The letters generally fall into one of two categories:
 - Epistles – intended for a wider audience
 - Pastoral Letters – intended for an individual

Epistolary Literature

- Paul's letters can be categorized as:
 - Genuine (written by Paul)
 - Deutero-Pauline (written after his death but in his manner)
 - Prison Epistles
 - Pastoral Letters

Paul's Letters

❑ Genuine:

Romans, I&II Corinthians,
Galatians, Philippians, I
Thessalonians, Philemon

❑ Deutero:

Ephesians, Colossians, II
Thessalonians, I & II Timothy,
Titus

❑ Prison:

Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians,
II Timothy, Philemon

❑ Pastoral:

I & II Timothy, Titus

Epistolary Literature

- Letters were used as literary substitutes for personal visits. Paul's preference was to address a situation in person but he was not always able to do so (Rom. 1:9-12).
- The epistles were written to be read in public as if the authors were actually speaking to their audiences

Epistolary Literature

The epistles had several purposes:

- ✓ To instruct and persuade its readers to make decisions that conformed to the faith
- ✓ To give theological instruction and moral counsel to a specific crisis or concern
- ✓ To show Paul's pastoral concern for the newly formed congregations whose faith and witness he was committed to maintaining, nurturing, and growing

Epistolary Literature

- ✓ (Non-Pauline): To aide persecuted, suffering, and marginalized Christians in remaining faithful to their traditions of faith rather than abandoning them
- ✓ To give theological insight to the issue of theodicy

Epistolary Literature

The epistles and letters were all written in response to believers who particular socio-historical context provoked a particular crisis that required theological explanation and guidance. The authors did *not* write with the expectation that you and I would be reading their letters.

Specificity v. Universality

Exigence

Proper interpretation requires an awareness of the letter's exigence and a gathering of as much information as possible regarding the original setting.

Example: I Corinthians & Galatians

Pauline Letters

Pauline Letters

- All of Paul's letters were written during his missionary journeys throughout Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy



Pauline Letters

- All of Paul's letters were written during his missionary journeys throughout Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy
- The chronology of Paul's journeys can be constructed from:
 - The latter half of the book of Acts (9-28)
 - Information from within his letters

Paul's Journeys

(All Dates are AD)

33 – Conversion: Gal 1:17; Acts 9, 22, 26

35 – 1st journey to Jerusalem: Gal 1:18-20; Acts 9:26-29

47/48 – From Antioch to Asia: Phil. 4:15; Acts 13-14

48 – 2nd journey to Jerusalem: Gal 2:1-10; Acts 15:1-12

49 – Macedonian mission from Galatia to Athens: I Cor. 16:1; II Cor. 11:9;
Gal. 4:13; I Thess. 2:2, 3:1; Phil. 4:15-16; Acts 16:6-17:34

49-52 – Corinthian mission: II Cor. 1:19, 11:7-9; I Thess. 3:6; Acts 18:1-11

Paul's Journeys

(All Dates are AD)

50 – Paul writes I & II Thessalonians

53-56 – Ephesian mission: I Cor. 16:1-8; Acts 19

53 – Paul writes Galatians

54 – Paul writes I Corinthians

55 – Paul writes Philippians and Philemon

55/56 – Paul writes II Corinthians

56 – Paul returns to Corinth: II Cor. 13:2, 10:11, 12:21

57 – 3rd visit to Corinth: II Cor. 13:1, Acts 20:1-3

Paul's Journeys

(All Dates are AD)

57 – Paul writes Romans

57 – 3rd journey to Jerusalem: Rom. 15:22-27; Acts 21:15-23:30

57-59 – Imprisonment and trial in Caesarea: Acts 23:31-26:21

58 – Paul writes Colossians and Ephesians (?)

60-62 – Imprisonment in Rome: Acts 28:15-31

62 – Mission to Spain: Rom. 15:22-24

62 – Paul writes Timothy and Titus / Killed

Paul's 1st Journey



Paul's 2nd Journey



Paul's 3rd Journey



The Gospels:

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John

The Gospels

The term gospel literally means “*good news*” and in Christianity what that *gospel/good news* is has developed over time.

The Good News

1. What Jesus himself talked and taught about God (Mark 1:14)
2. Early Christian preaching about the death and resurrection of Christ (Romans 1:1-5; I Corinthians 15:1-8)

The Good News

3. Preaching that included both what Jesus had taught about God and what Christians had said about Jesus and the events of His life (Acts 10:34-43)
4. Books that offer in written form what had been proclaimed orally within communities.

The Good News

To what genre of literature does a Gospel belong?

The Gospels are “sermons in story” (Howard Kee).

- ✓ Biographical and historical
- ✓ Written with an intended goal of effecting definitive changes in the way we think and believe (John 21:25)

The Authors

- ✓ Most of the gospels were written one generation after Jesus Christ sometime around the beginning of the deaths of the Apostles
- ✓ Most of the writers were anonymous and ascribed the authorial names to their works
- ✓ Used literary devices that were meant to be rhetorically effective (Mk. 5) to their readers as opposed to being concerned with chronological accuracy - this accounts for some of the inconsistencies among the gospels

Materials in the Gospel

- Sayings: memorable quotations – legal, prophetic, wisdom, autobiographical
- Stories: biographical, controversy, didactic, commissioning
- Parables
- Miracles: exorcisms, healings, resuscitations, nature, feeding
- Hymns
- Genealogies

Dynamics of the World Behind the Gospels

- ✓ Religious: The dominant characteristic of the Gospel world was the religious diversity with Judaism.
 - ✓ Sadducees
 - ✓ Pharisees
 - ✓ Essenes
 - ✓ Samaritans

Sadducees

- The Sadducees were the small ruling aristocracy of the Jews. They comprised the vast majority of the Sanhedrin Council, controlled the Temple, and provided the High Priest
- Mark 12:18-27
- They denied: resurrection, angelic intercession, Pharisaical oral interpretation of the law, immortality of the spirit

Pharisees

- The Pharisees were the larger, more popular, religious leaders whose main function was the interpretation of the Law
- Their main contention with Jesus was around religious purity, the Sabbath, and Jesus' rejection of their status (Mark 7, John 9)
- Acts 23

Dynamics of the World Behind the Gospels

- ✓ Political: Jerusalem was conquered by Pompey in 64 BC and remained Roman occupation during the life of Jesus.
 - ✓ Roman rule required the imposition of a King or governor to represent Cesar but also allowed for native/indigenous authority – Sanhedrin Council
 - ✓ This two-fold leadership left the question of authority under constant debate

Dynamics of the World Behind the Gospels

- ✓ Social: First century life was greatly impacted and influenced by Greek and Roman culture, better known as *Hellenism*.
- ✓ *Hellenism* emphasized: individualism, acquisition of knowledge and wealth, dualism which supported the beliefs of *Gnosticism*
- ✓ *Judaism* emphasized: community, obedience, and evil spirit possession

The Gospels

Four Pictures of Jesus

Matthew

Portrays Jesus in the light of Moses for a Jewish-Christian community with emphasis on the founding of the church

Mark

Is a fast paced, action packed history of the *Son of Man* whose life is only understood in His suffering and death

Luke

Portrays Jesus as the great liberator
who interacts with the oppressed and
focuses on the work of the Holy
Spirit

The Synoptics

- Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the Synoptic Gospels – *syn* = *Same* & *opto* = *to see*
- They follow the same order of events

Markan Priority

- ✓ The order of events favor Mark as an early source for Matthew and Luke
- ✓ Mt & Mk v. Lk or
Lk & Mk v. Mt but *never*
Mt & Lk. v. Mk

Markan Priority

- ✓ Mark is shorter, less detailed, more difficult, and lacks the speeches/sayings of Matthew and Luke
- ✓ A later writing would not have omitted the sayings of Jesus

John

Emphasizes Jesus as the revelation of
all that can be known about God
through signs that require a decision

From Jesus to Us

Transmission of the Gospel Traditions

Transmission of the Gospel

1. The Historical Jesus: The things Jesus actually did and said
 - *The Jesus Seminar*
2. Early Traditions
 - Written Sources – people wrote down what Jesus said and preserved them
 - Oral Traditions – people remembered what Jesus said and did and shared their stories, e.g. Peter

Transmission of the Gospel

3. Redaction of the Gospel: The Gospel writers compile their books by taking, merging, and editing the early traditions.

This was done by more than the four gospel writers of our New Testament

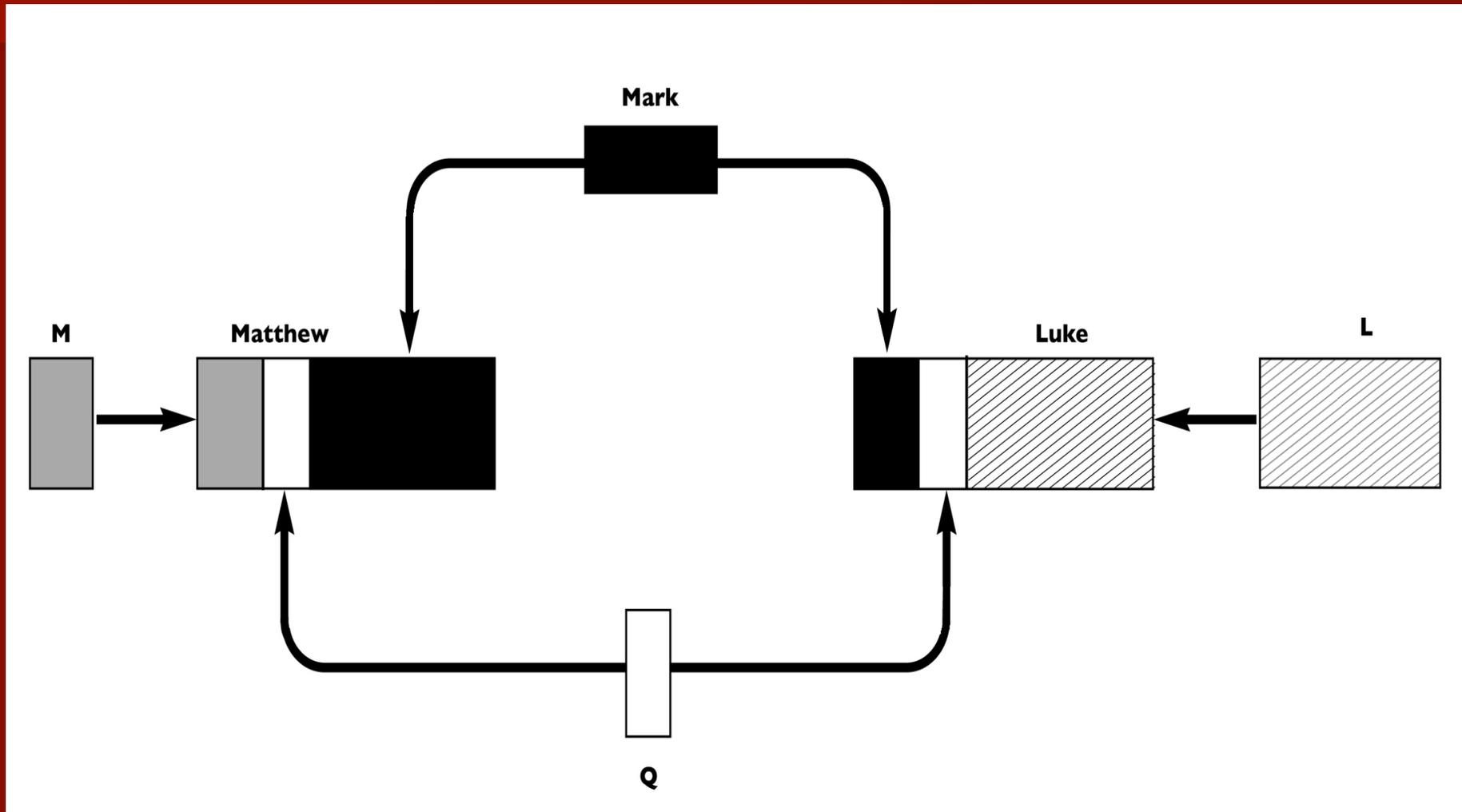
Q Source

“*Q*”, German for *Quelle* = Source, is an early non-preserved tradition (oral and/or written) of the sayings of Jesus used by both Matthew and Luke

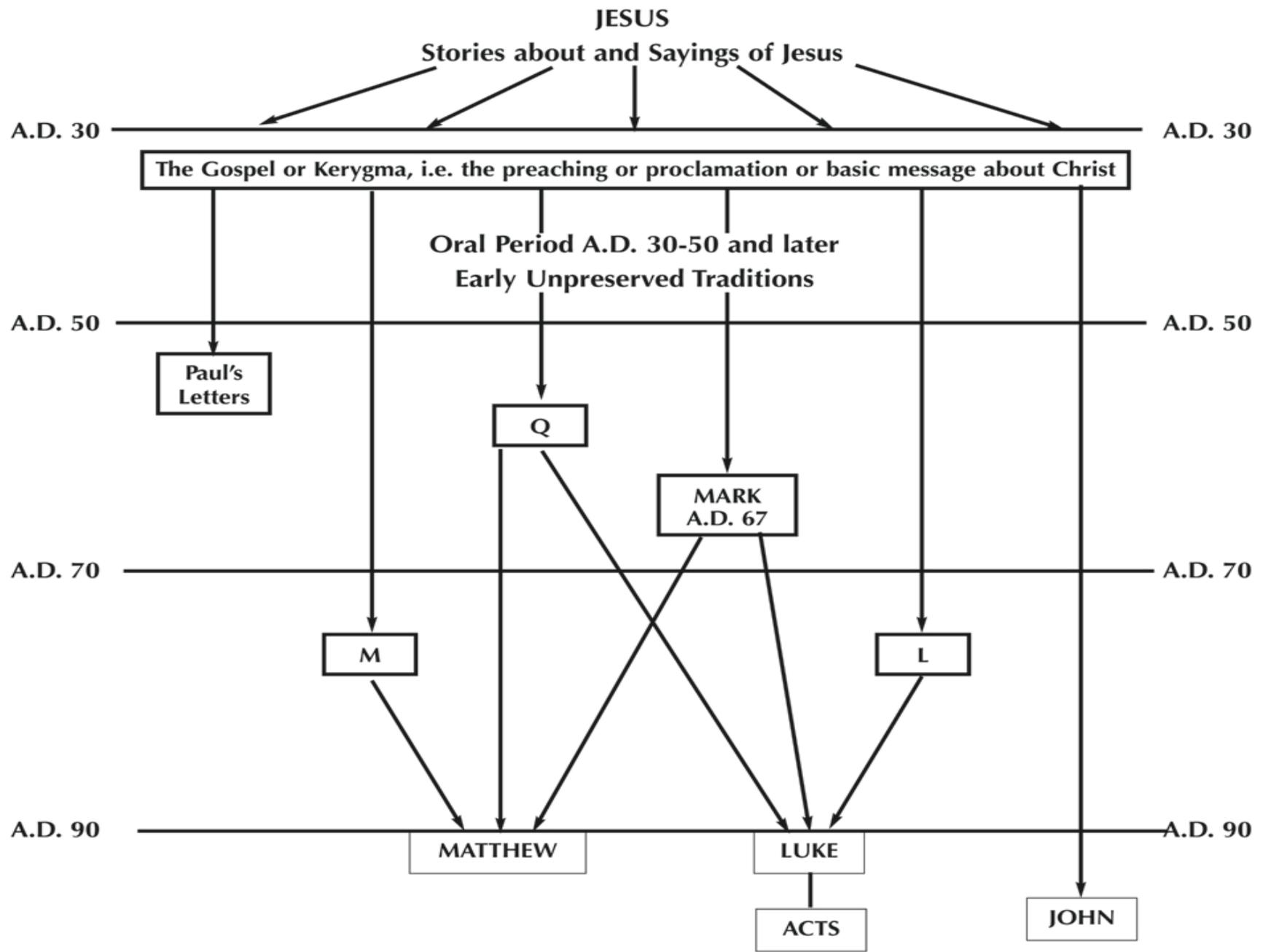
Q Source

These sayings are used and ordered differently by Matthew and Luke which suggests that they/it were used independently along with their other sources

The Synoptics



Proposed Timeline of Gospel Formation



Other Known Existing Gospels

- ✓ Gospel of James (stepbrother of Jesus): focuses on Mary and then follows Matthew and Luke
- ✓ Infancy Gospel of Thomas: The lost years, 5-12, of Jesus' life
- ✓ Gospel of Peter: Descriptive account of Jesus' death and resurrection
- ✓ Gospel of the Hebrews: Quoted in other works but not found in itself

Other Known Existing Gospels

- ✓ Gospel of Thomas: A collection of Jesus' sayings, accepted as accurate by most scholars
- ✓ Gospel of Mary (Magdalene): Emphasizes the role and place of women as disciples
- ✓ Apocryphon of James: Conversation of Jesus with Peter and James before His ascension
- ✓ Dialogue of the Savior: Debate between Jesus, Matthew, Judas, and Mary

Transmission of the Gospel

4. Preservation of the Manuscripts: People made copies of the completed Gospels and shared them around the world
5. Translation: Scholars translate copies of the Gospels into other languages
6. Reception: We read about what Jesus said and did in our modern editions of the Bible
7. Proclamations and Paraphrases

Next Week:

The Process of Canonization
– How Scriptures Became
The Bible