

For reasons related to an unusually convoluted thread (I'd be surprised if anyone can even detect the thread! I myself barely can - it has to do with Jesus' view of the afterlife) I need to answer a reader's question about why scholars think the Gospel of Mark was the first to be written (once I do that, I can show how Luke often changed Mark, which will get me back to Luke's treatment of Jesus' rejection in Nazareth, which will get me back to the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, which will get me back to the question of whether the parable represents Jesus' own views....).

So far as I can tell, and to my surprise, I've never published a blog post showing why scholars - since the 19th century - have typically maintained that Mark was the first of the Synoptic Gospels to be written and that Luke and Matthew both used Mark for many of their own stories about Jesus. That view is called "Markan priority" (Mark is prior to the other two). Here is a thumbnail sketch of three arguments often cited, as laid out in my textbook on the New Testament

Arguments for Markan Priority

For the past century or so, three arguments have proved widely convincing for establishing Mark's priority to Matthew and Luke:

Patterns of Agreement. Since the main reason for thinking that the Gospels share a common source is their verbatim agreements, it makes sense to examine the nature of these agreements in order to decide which of the books was used by the other two. If you were to make a detailed comparison of the word-for-word agreements among these Gospels, an interesting pattern would emerge. Sometimes ...

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