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

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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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And Then There Was Q
Jesus’ Death and Resurrection in Mark: Another Blast from the Past