

In a previous post I explained why scholars have long held to “Markan Priority,” the view that Mark was the first Gospel written and that Matthew and Luke both used it for constructing their own narratives. One great pay-off for this conclusion (it really is significant) is that it is possible, given this result, to see how Matthew and Luke have each *modified* Mark in the stories they received from him. This approach is called “redaction criticism.” A “redactor” is an editor. Redaction criticism looks at the editing decisions made by an editor of a source.

Years ago I described the method and gave an illustration of how it worked on the blog, in part to show that finding the differences between the Gospels is not necessarily a *negative* thing, but can have very *positive* results for interpreting the message each one has. This is what I said then:

I have stressed that knowing that there are differences, even discrepancies, among the Gospels does not need to be considered in a purely negative light. There are very serious positive pay-offs. These differences/discrepancies open up possibilities for interpretation, because they (in theory) prevent a person from importing a meaning into a text that is difficult to sustain from the words of the text itself.

If you pretend that Mark’s version of Jesus going to his death – from his trial to his death itself — is the same as Luke’s version, you *really* miss out on what each author is trying to emphasize, in a very big way indeed. Mark portrays Jesus as ...

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