

The Formation of the Gospels

How were the Gospels formed?

- The 4 Gospels were NOT written completely independent of each other
- There is a high degree of verbal similarity among Matthew, Mark, & Luke in their narratives
 - This would not be surprising in Jesus' sayings
 - But it would be highly unlikely if they were not from a common source since:
 1. The stories were first told in Aramaic, yet the similarities are in their Greek form
 2. Greek word order is extremely free, yet often the similarities extend even to precise word order
 3. It is highly unlikely that 3 people in 3 different parts of the Roman Empire would tell the same story with the same words
 - Even to such minor points of individual style as prepositions and conjunctions

Example: The Feeding of the 5000

- Number of words used to tell the story:
 - Matthew 14:15-21 = 157
 - Mark 6:35-44 = 194
 - Luke 9:12-17 = 153
 - John 6:4-14 = 199
- Number of words common to *all* of the Synoptics: 53
- Number of words John has in common with the others: 8
 - “Five; Two; Five thousand; Took loaves; Twelve baskets of Pieces”
- Percentage of Agreement
 - Matthew w/Mark: 59%
 - Matthew w/Luke: 44%
 - Luke w/Mark: 40%
 - John w/Matthew: 8.5%
 - John w/Mark: 8.5%
 - John w/Luke: 6.5%

Conclusions

- Mark wrote first
- Matthew & Luke used Mark's gospel plus other material to which they both had access
- But probably did not have access to the writings of the other
- John wrote completely independent of the other 3
 - Though probably was familiar at least with Mark, if not all the other Evangelists