

Dr. Robert C. Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Session 5, Book Characteristics Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Session 5, Book Characteristics, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Robert C. Newman explores the characteristics of the Synoptic Gospels, focusing on Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It begins by examining what is known about the authors themselves, including their backgrounds and intended audiences. **The lecture then investigates the unique aims and structures of each Gospel**, considering factors like the inclusion of Old Testament prophecies in Matthew, vividness and detail in Mark, and emphasis on universalism and social relationships in Luke. **It discusses key phrases, distinctive material, and various traditions associated with each Gospel.** Newman also addresses potential chronological discrepancies and explores literary techniques employed by each author. **The lecture wraps up with outlines for each of the synoptic gospels.**

2. 21 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Session 5 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Gospels → Synoptic Gospels).



**Newman_Synoptics
_Session05.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Session 5, Book Characteristics

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. Robert C. Newman's lecture on the Synoptic Gospels.

Briefing Document: Characteristics of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke)

Overview: This lecture excerpt focuses on the distinguishing characteristics of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It covers authorship, intended audience, aims, structure, and unique features of each Gospel.

Key Themes and Ideas:

I. Gospel of Matthew

- **Author:** Little is definitively known about Matthew beyond what's mentioned in the New Testament (seven times in four books). He is identified in the Apostle Lists as Levi of Alphaeus (Mark 2:14). Matthew 10:3 is unique because it's the only list using the terms "public and tax collector" to describe Matthew.
- **Audience:** Primarily Jewish and Jewish-Christian. Matthew assumes a familiarity with Jewish customs and practices (e.g., washing hands, phylacteries) without extensive explanation.
- *"Matthew's original audience, the Messianic emphasis in Matthew, is certainly more appropriate for Jews, and you find rather quickly in the Gentile church Christ almost becoming kind of Jesus' surname... rather than his title."*
- *"Matthew's gospel tends to assume a knowledge of Jewish practices rather than explain them. Mark tends to explain them, for instance, and that again suggests that his principal readers in view are Jews and Jewish Christians."*
- **Aim:** To demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah who fulfilled Old Testament prophecies. He cites more prophecies than the other Gospel writers and draws parallels between Jesus' ministry and the history of Israel.
- *"The contents suggest that Matthew's purpose is to show Jesus as the Messiah who fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies. Matthew cites more prophecies, and a wider variety of them, than any of the other gospel writers."*
- **Structure:** Can be divided into three main sections:
- Preparatory material

- Jesus' public proclamation of the Gospel (ministry to the multitudes)
- Jesus' private ministry to his disciples, suffering, death, and resurrection.
- The presence of five major discourses which is a parallel to the Pentateuch was discussed but not fully endorsed by Newman.
- **Distinctive Features:** Frequent use of the phrase "that it might be fulfilled," connecting Jesus' life to Old Testament prophecies.
- *"There are two phrases that are rather common in Matthew. One of them, of course, is that it might be fulfilled."*
- Use of the phrase "kingdom of heaven" (over 30 times), which is considered synonymous with "kingdom of God" and used in a similar context to Mark and Luke.
- *"The other characteristic phrase in Matthew is the kingdom of heaven... I think this phrase is synonymous with the kingdom of God."*
- Unique birth narrative material focusing on Joseph's perspective, including the visit of the wise men and the flight to Egypt.
- Significant material on the church, including references to *ekklesia* (church) and the Great Commission.
- Concentration of miracles in chapters 8 and 9.

II. Gospel of Mark

- **Author:** Identified as John Mark. More is known about him from the New Testament than Matthew. He was a cousin of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10) and his mother, Mary, owned a house in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12). Speculation suggests that Mark may have been present at Jesus' arrest (Mark 14:51-52).
- **Audience:** Primarily Gentile, possibly Roman. Aramaic phrases are translated, and Jewish practices are explained, suggesting a non-Jewish audience unfamiliar with Palestinian languages and culture. The presence of Latinisms is a possibility that points to a Roman audience.
- *"Pretty clearly, his audience is Gentile and possibly Roman. The Aramaic phrases, of which there are many in Mark, are generally translated; thus, readers were not expected to know Aramaic."*

- **Aim:** The opening line in Mark 1:1 states the aim: "the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Some suggest it's aimed at the Roman mentality (practical, action-oriented).
- *"The opening line, of course, may very well state the aim of Mark 1:1, the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."*
- **Characteristics:** Vivid and graphic details.
- Fast-paced narrative with frequent use of "euthus" (immediately).
- *"The Greek word euthus immediately is often translated that way. It's used over 40 times and tends to give Mark's narrative sort of a rushed, breathless quality."*
- Emphasis on Jesus' actions rather than long discourses.
- *"Mark stresses Jesus' actions more than Jesus' words."*
- Packed with miracles (18 recorded).
- Inclusion of Aramaic words, usually translated, some unique to Mark (e.g., *Boanerges, Talitha kum, Ephatha, Abba*).

III. Gospel of Luke

- **Author:** Luke, a physician, likely Gentile. The "we passages" in Acts suggest that Luke was a companion of Paul on several journeys. He was loved by Paul (Colossians 4:14) and remained with him until the end (2 Timothy 4:11).
- *"From these sparse references, however, we can infer that Luke was a physician and that he was loved by Paul... That he was a faithful companion of Paul even to the very end in Rome... And he was apparently Gentile rather than Jewish."*
- **Audience:** Educated Gentiles.
- **Aim:** To assure Theophilus (and a wider audience) of the certainty/reliability of what he had been taught about Jesus.
- *"The aim of Luke is to allow Theophilus... to know the certainty or reliability of the things he has been taught."*
- **Method:** Luke was aware that many had undertaken to draw up accounts, and that he had carefully studied all related materials from the beginning, using materials delivered by eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, and then wrote an orderly, sequential, accurate account.

- *"Luke says that he had carefully studied all related materials himself... Luke used materials delivered by a group designated as eyewitnesses and ministers of the word... Luke tells us that he wrote up an orderly, sequential, accurate account."*
- **Emphases and Distinctive Features:** Universalism: The Gospel is for all people (Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, men and women, respectable people and outcasts). Emphasizes Jesus' gracious attitude towards outcasts.
- Emphasis on prayer.
- Emphasis on social relationships, especially wealth and poverty.
- Preservation of Semitic praise psalms (Magnificat, Benedictus, Gloria, Nunc Dimittis).
- Unique illustrative parables (Good Samaritan, Rich Man and Lazarus, Pharisee and Publican).
- *"These do not transfer meaning from physical to spiritual or secular to religious or something. Instead, they picture a sample of the spiritual truth in operation and we are to generalize the principle by hints in the context."*
- Miracles related to women.
- Narrative of the Parian ministry.

IV. General Considerations:

- The Gospels are generally reliable and tell what happened, but harmonizing all incidents perfectly may not be possible.
- The lecture addresses the liberal theological perspective, which often questions the authenticity and dating of the Gospels based on perceived contradictions and theological disagreements.
- The lecturer advocates for a view that acknowledges the Gospels' reliability and historicity while also recognizing the literary and cultural contexts in which they were written.

This briefing document provides a solid overview of the content from the provided source.

4. Study Guide: Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Session 5, Book Characteristics

Synoptic Gospels: A Study Guide

Quiz: Short Answer Questions

1. What is the significance of Matthew being referred to as "publican" (tax collector) in his apostle list?
2. Give two examples of how Matthew's Gospel assumes a knowledge of Jewish practices.
3. Briefly outline the three-part structure of Matthew's Gospel based on transition passages.
4. What are two phrases common to Matthew?
5. What is the significance of the green grass detail in Mark's account of the feeding of the 5,000?
6. How does Mark's Gospel reflect a sense of urgency or activity?
7. Provide one example of how Mark translates Aramaic words and why this might be significant?
8. How can we infer that Luke was a Gentile rather than a Jew?
9. According to Luke's prologue, what was his purpose in writing the Gospel?
10. Name and describe the two types of parables used in the Synoptic Gospels.

Quiz Answer Key

1. It highlights Matthew's past as a tax collector, which was a despised profession among the Jews. It is also significant because Matthew's Gospel is the only one to use that term.
2. Matthew 15:2 refers to the tradition of the elders about washing hands without explaining it. Matthew 23:5 mentions phylacteries and tassels without detailing their significance.
3. The preparatory material (genealogy, birth narratives, temptation), Jesus' public proclamation of the Gospel, and Jesus' private ministry to his disciples (suffering, death, and resurrection).

4. "That it might be fulfilled" (referring to Old Testament prophecies) and "the kingdom of heaven."
5. It provides a vivid, picturesque detail that adds color and depth to the narrative. It also gives the audience a sense of the season, indicating that the grass is green during that time of year in that part of the world.
6. The frequent use of the word "immediately" (euthus) gives the narrative a rushed, breathless quality, emphasizing the activity of Jesus' ministry.
7. Mark translates "Talitha Koum", which means "Little girl, arise," and the very name Bartimaeus is translated, which is an Aramaic name that means "Son of Timaeus".
8. In Colossians 4:10-14, Paul distinguishes between those "from the circumcision" (Jewish Christians) and others, placing Luke in the latter group, implying he was not Jewish.
9. To allow Theophilus to know the certainty (or reliability) of the things he had been taught about Jesus and the Christian faith.
10. Story Parables: transfer meaning from physical/secular to spiritual/religious with earthly stories with heavenly meaning. Illustrative (example or paradigm)
Parables: do not transfer meaning but picture a sample of the spiritual truth in operation and we are to generalize the principle by hints in the context.

Essay Format Questions

1. Compare and contrast the portrayals of Jesus in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. How do their respective audiences and aims influence these portrayals?
2. Analyze the significance of the five discourses in Matthew's Gospel. Do they support the idea that Matthew structured his Gospel around the Pentateuch?
3. Discuss the characteristics that make Mark's Gospel unique. How do these characteristics contribute to the overall message and impact of the Gospel?
4. Examine the evidence suggesting Luke was a Gentile physician. How might his background have influenced his writing and the emphases in his Gospel and the Book of Acts?
5. Evaluate the concept of "universalism" in Luke's Gospel. How does Luke emphasize Jesus' concern for all people, including marginalized groups?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Synoptic Gospels:** The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which share similar content, structure, and perspective.
- **Messiah:** The anointed one, the expected king and deliverer of the Jewish people; in Greek, "Christos."
- **Phylacteries:** Small leather boxes containing scriptural passages, worn by observant Jews during prayer.
- **Tassels (of Garments):** Fringes worn on the corners of garments by observant Jews as a reminder of God's commandments.
- **Dispensationalism:** A theological system that divides history into distinct periods or "dispensations" in which God relates to humanity in different ways.
- **Ekklesia:** A Greek term meaning "assembly" or "church." In the Septuagint, it often translates the Hebrew word for "congregation."
- **Huperetes:** A Greek term meaning "assistant" or "under-rower," used to describe Mark's role during Paul's missionary journey.
- **Latinisms:** Words or phrases borrowed from Latin into another language (in this case, Greek).
- **Aramaic:** A Semitic language closely related to Hebrew, spoken in Palestine during the time of Jesus.
- **Hippocratic School:** A school of medicine in ancient Greece that emphasized observation, diagnosis, and natural treatments.
- **Hellenist:** A person who adopts Greek culture, language, and customs.
- **Theophoric Name:** A name containing the name of a god or deity (e.g., Theophilus, "lover of God").
- **Parable:** A short story used to teach a moral or spiritual lesson.
- **Semitic Praise Psalms:** Semitic praise psalms in Luke's Gospel, like the Magnificat and Benedictus.
- **Paroimia:** A Greek word for "figure of speech," used in John's Gospel to describe what are effectively parables.

- **Parian Ministry:** The portion of Jesus' ministry that took place in Perea, a region east of the Jordan River.
- **Septuagint:** A Greek version of the Hebrew Bible, traditionally said to have been translated by 70 or 72 Jewish scholars.
- **Rabbinic Literature:** Jewish writings and teachings produced by rabbis, particularly during the Talmudic period (2nd to 5th centuries CE).
- **Olivet Discourse:** Found in Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, and Luke 21; Jesus' detailed prophecies about the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and the end times.
- **Book of Testimonies:** A hypothetical collection of Old Testament passages used in the early church to demonstrate that Jesus was the Messiah.

5. FAQs on Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Session 5, Book Characteristics, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Synoptic Gospels FAQs:

1. What is the Synoptic Gospels course about and what topics have been covered so far?

The Synoptic Gospels course explores the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, examining their authorship, dates, characteristics, and the historical context of Jesus. Topics covered include the historical Jesus, the Jewish background to the New Testament, an introduction to exegesis and narrative genre, a discussion of authorship and dating, and analysis of the specific characteristics of each Gospel.

2. What can we know about the authors of the Synoptic Gospels?

While we don't know much about the individual authors of the Synoptic Gospels, the lecture provides information on the authors of Matthew, Mark, and Luke based on biblical references and traditions. Matthew, also known as Levi of Alphaeus, was a tax collector who became a disciple of Jesus. Mark, possibly John Mark, was a cousin of Barnabas and a companion of both Paul and Peter. Luke was a physician and a Gentile companion of Paul, known for his meticulous research and careful writing style.

3. Who were the intended audiences for each of the Synoptic Gospels, and how does this influence their content?

Matthew's Gospel appears to be primarily aimed at a Jewish audience, as it assumes knowledge of Jewish customs and emphasizes Jesus as the Messiah who fulfills Old Testament prophecies. Mark's Gospel is likely targeted towards a Gentile, possibly Roman, audience, explaining Jewish practices and translating Aramaic phrases. Luke's Gospel is aimed at a broader Gentile audience, particularly educated Gentiles, as indicated by his elegant Greek style, emphasis on universalism, and dedication to Theophilus.

4. What are some unique characteristics of the Gospel of Matthew that set it apart from the other Synoptic Gospels?

Matthew's Gospel is distinguished by its Messianic emphasis, frequent citations of Old Testament prophecies, and a possible parallel between Jesus' ministry and the history of Israel. It includes five major discourses of Jesus, possibly mirroring the Pentateuch, and features unique material like the visit of the wise men, Herod's attempt to kill Jesus, and

the flight to Egypt. Additionally, Matthew refers to the kingdom of heaven and contains unique material related to the church.

5. What are some distinctive features of Mark's Gospel, and what impression do they create?

Mark's Gospel is known for its vivid and picturesque details, rapid pace, and emphasis on action over discourse. The Gospel often includes details such as the names of people involved, the time of day, and the surrounding crowds that are frequently not found in the other Gospels. Mark uses many Aramaic words, which are usually translated into Greek. These characteristics contribute to a sense of immediacy and urgency in Mark's narrative.

6. What are some characteristics of the Gospel of Luke?

Luke's Gospel is characterized by its emphasis on universalism, prayer, and social relationships, particularly concerning wealth and poverty. The Gospel often features accounts of Jesus' interactions with outcasts of society. Luke's careful research and use of eyewitness accounts, as well as his medical background, contribute to the accuracy and detail of his narratives. He is distinctive in the Semitic praise psalms that he preserves, as well as illustrative parables such as the Good Samaritan.

7. What is known about Luke's methods in composing his Gospel, and how does this affect its reliability?

Luke explicitly states his method in the prologue to his Gospel, indicating that he carefully studied related materials, interviewed eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, and wrote an orderly, sequential, and accurate account. His meticulous approach, combined with his training as a Greek physician and his reliance on eyewitness accounts, suggests that Luke aimed to provide a reliable and historically grounded narrative of Jesus' life and teachings.

8. What can be inferred from the text about the structure of the Synoptic Gospels?

Each of the Synoptic Gospels has a similar structure, beginning with preparation for Jesus' ministry, followed by his Galilean ministry, then a journey to Jerusalem, culminating in his last week, betrayal, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection. However, Luke stands apart in that his middle section is longer, consisting of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem and Parian ministry. Matthew, Mark and Luke offer varying degrees of emphasis and detail within these sections.