

Luke's Use of Mark

According to the dominant source theories, Luke preserves only a little more than half of the Gospel of Mark, and he edits what he does preserve in accord with certain principles. Studying these editorial changes is the work of redaction critics (see "Redaction Criticism" in chap. 3).

Organization

Some Markan material is moved about.

Examples:

- The story of Jesus preaching in Nazareth is moved forward to provide the occasion for his inaugural sermon (Luke 4:16–30; cf. Mark 6:1–6).
- The disciples' dispute over who is the greatest is moved to take place at the final supper (Luke 22:24–27; cf. Mark 10:41–45).

Abbreviation

Luke omits from Mark's stories what he considers to be insignificant or inappropriate.

Examples:

- a comment on the incompetence of physicians (Luke 8:42–48; cf. Mark 5:26)
- conversation between Jesus and the father of a demoniac child (Luke 9:37–43; cf. Mark 9:21–24)
- the naked young man in the garden (Luke 22:47–53; cf. Mark 14:43–52)
- Note: Matthew's Gospel also omits this Markan material (Matt. 9:20–22; 17:14–18; 26:47–56).

Sophistication

Casual or colloquial expressions are rewritten in the more polished Greek of the educated class.

Examples:

- Instances of the "historical present" tense are changed (150 out of 151; he missed Mark 5:35 at Luke 8:49).
- Mark's repetitious use of words such as "and" and "immediately" is reduced.

- Clear antecedents are provided to pronouns that lack them.
- Use of syntactical constructions such as genitive absolutes and articular infinitives is increased (these portend a "higher class" of Greek).

Accuracy

Instances of questionable accuracy are corrected.

Examples:

- "King Herod" (Mark 6:14) becomes "Herod the tetrarch" (Luke 9:7).
- The reference to Abiathar as high priest in Mark 2:26 is omitted (Luke 6:4; cf. 1 Sam 21:1–6).

Contextual Relevance

Some changes make things more relevant to Luke's intended audience.

Examples:

- Probably because he is writing for a culturally diverse audience throughout the Roman Empire, Luke eliminates all eight of the Aramaic expressions found in Mark: "Boanerges" (3:17); "talitha cum" (5:41); "corban" (7:11); "ephphatha" (7:34); "Bartimaeus" (10:46); "Abba" (14:36); "Golgotha" (15:22); "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani" (15:34).
- Notations providing broad historical/cultural context are introduced (cf. Luke 3:1–3 with Mark 1:4) because Luke wants the story he tells to be received as a work of "world history" with implications for all humanity.
- The word for "village" (*kōmē*) is often changed to that for "city" (*polis*) in order to give the story a more urban feel that transcends its setting in rural Palestine.
- The monetary value of coins is increased in order to keep the story relevant for those who live more prosperously than did Jesus and his original followers (cf. Luke 9:3, where the Greek

word *argyriion* means "silver," with Mark 6:8, where the Greek *chalkos* means "copper").

Character Portrayal

Luke changes the way major characters are portrayed in the Gospel story, including Jesus, his disciples, and his family.

Jesus

- Statements that imply a lack of ability or authority on Jesus's part are omitted (comment in Mark 6:5 does not appear in Luke 4:16–30).
- References to Jesus exhibiting human emotions are dropped: pity (Mark 1:41), anger (Mark 3:5), sadness (Mark 3:5), wonder (Mark 6:6), compassion (Mark 6:34), indignation (Mark 10:14), and love (Mark 10:21).
- Some stories in which Jesus acts in a somewhat violent way are omitted (cursing of the fig tree [Mark 11:12–14, 20–25; but cf. Luke 16:6–9]; overturning tables in the temple [Mark 11:15–17; cf. Luke 19:45–46]).

- Stories that might seem to portray Jesus as a magician are dropped (Mark 7:31–37; 8:22–26).

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Disciples

- Stories of Jesus rebuking Peter (Mark 8:33), of James and John's presumptuous request (Mark 10:35–40), and of the disciples' flight at Jesus's arrest are eliminated.
- Peter's denial (Luke 22:31–34; Mark 14:29–31) and the disciples' sleep in Gethsemane (Luke 22:45–46; Mark 14:37–41) are muted and explained.
- Lack of understanding is attributed not to the disciples' unperceptive nature but instead to divine concealment (cf. Luke 9:45 with Mark 9:32; see Luke 18:34).

Jesus's family

- Reference to Jesus's family "coming to seize him" is dropped (Mark 3:21).
- Story of Jesus designating his "true family" is reworded to lessen the contrast with his earthly family (cf. Luke 8:19–21 with Mark 3:31–35).