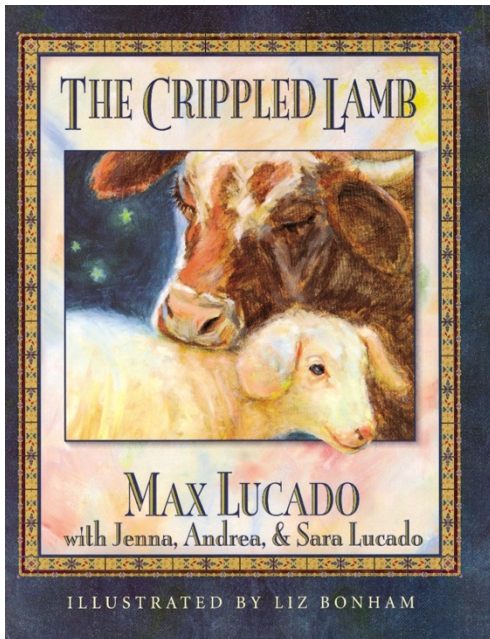
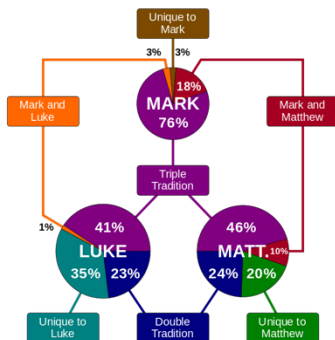


## Genre and the Gospels



**What is a Genre:** a prior agreement between authors and readers or as a set of shared expectations or as a consensus of 'fore-understandings exterior to a text which enable us to follow that text'<sup>1</sup> Genre is built into the fabric of all media. Publishers give us genre cues through cover design, typography, and even the size of the pages. Yet when it comes to the Bible, nearly all the genre cues are removed for the modern reader. Even a Bible's layout and feel—with all the biblical books bound as one book with a fancy cover and binding—confuses our senses.<sup>2</sup> There can in that sense be no unique genre, as a truly unique genre cannot have a prior agreement. Genre's do however shift, merge and change.

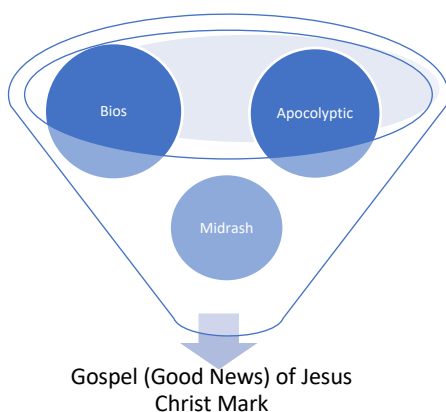
Relationships between the Synoptic Gospels



### The Genre of the Gospels:

<sup>3</sup>The Gospel of Mark probably dates from c. AD 66–70, Matthew and Luke around AD 85–90, John AD 90–110.

The Gospel of Mark is then the prototype Gospel, exploring its Genre should give clues to the other Gospels, understanding that they are unique texts in the Gospel Genre.



Mark appears to draw structurally from three dominant genres of his day. **Bios** – Which is similar to our modern Biography but framed as the hero's story. It retains the question about the crucifixion of the hero. **Apocalypses**, but removing much of the supernatural elements that accompany Daniel/ Revelation. It is important to note that Mark retains the political disruption and identification with the minority group. **Midrash** – In this case the Gospel itself would be understood as an interpretation of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. The dominant critique of this idea is that whilst containing midrash, the Gospels themselves are not Midrash.

<sup>1</sup> <https://jesusmemoirs.wordpress.com/2016/07/25/the-genre-of-marks-gospel/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://blog.bible/bible-engagers-blog/entry/why-genres-in-the-bible-matter>

<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel\\_of\\_Matthew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Matthew)

**The Genres in the Gospels:** The gospels themselves contain a number of Genres, each of which are used in the service of the dominant themes and focus of the Gospels.

**Parables:** The Parables of Jesus are short stories told to illustrate through similes, or to provoke thought and conversation. In some instances we are given an explanation attributed to Jesus by the Gospel writer, but most often not. When reading parables it is important to check the context (in text audience), remember the cultural background of Jesus (Jewish Rabbi), and to resist a simple answer. Levine<sup>4</sup> points out that mustard was used in medicine, a very practical and accessible aid to those in need.

**Matthew 13.31-32**

He put before them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.'

**John 19.24**

So they said to one another, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it.' This was to fulfil what the scripture says, 'They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots.'

**Gloss:** This is the voice of the narrator. It is important to note that the narrator shapes much of the interpretive lens for each section. It can also be expanded as a concept to include the way in which sections are written alongside each other. Parables are often grouped together, and it becomes natural to read them as thematically linked.

**Teaching:-** As well as teaching through parables Jesus is also recalled as having taught in a more explicit manner, the most well known example would be the teaching known as the teaching on the mount, which contains the beatitudes (Matthew 5-7). Jesus teaching can be separated into theological and ethical teaching, but it would be wise to realise that those categories are perceived after the event.

**Narrative:-** The narrative as a genre is perhaps the closest to modern biographies, but it is important to recall that the primary concern of the Gospel writers was not accuracy, but rather ideology<sup>5</sup>.

**Poetry/ Hymnody:-** The Logos Hymn in John's Gospel and the Magnificat in Luke are examples of Hymns being quoted. They reinforce that the gospels come from worshipping traditions, and construct an environment in which focus of the hymn is worth praising.

**Miracle Story:-** When reading miracle stories it is important to recall the other themes of the Gospel in question. For example Miracles in Mark's gospel often work to illustrate the apocalyptic nature of Jesus<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Amy-Jill Levine. Short Stories by Jesus: The Enigmatic Parables of a Controversial Rabbi

<sup>5</sup> the science of ideas; the study of their origin and nature.

<sup>6</sup> <https://martinnewellcp.files.wordpress.com/2019/03/binding-the-strongman-abridged-by-ched-myers-with-forward-by-daniel-berrigan.pdf?fbclid=IwAR33q6SAyOzFDwd3yJfx8lOx-mlAV06AgyeIUMCILK5xPVgXo5S2x6uTjw0>