A HARMONY OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS — CHAPTER FOUR

Matthew 4, Mark 1 (continued), and Luke 4 Woven Into One Continuous Narrative

Based on the American Standard Version (ASV, 1901) — Public Domain

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Preface: Continuation of the Harmony

This volume continues the harmony of Matthew, Mark, and Luke begun in Chapters One through Three. Chapter four covers the opening of Jesus's public ministry in Galilee — the most richly paralleled section of the three Synoptic Gospels so far. All three evangelists are actively present throughout, and for the first time in the harmony the triple tradition dominates: Matthew 4, Mark 1 (its concluding sections), and Luke 4 cover largely the same sequence of events and can be read side by side with only modest differences in emphasis and detail.

Each section is identified by its source Gospel in brackets:

[Matt] = Matthew

[Mark] = Mark

[Luke] = Luke

[Matt / Mark], **[Matt / Luke]**, **[Mark / Luke]**, or **[Matt / Mark / Luke]** = parallel passages

The translation throughout is the **American Standard Version (ASV, 1901)**, a public domain text of high scholarly accuracy. No words are invented or paraphrased; all text is drawn directly from the ASV.

Chronological ordering follows the scholarly consensus of A.T. Robertson's *A Harmony of the Gospels* (1922), Kurt Aland's *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, and Orville Daniel's *A Harmony of the Four Gospels* (2nd ed., 1996).

Part Three: The Opening of the Galilean Ministry

Section 26 — Jesus Returns to Galilee and Begins to Preach [Matt 4:12–17 / Mark 1:14–15 / Luke 4:14–15]

Now when Jesus heard that John was delivered up, he withdrew into Galilee. And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and a fame went out concerning him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.

And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying,

The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, Toward the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, The people that sat in darkness Saw a great light, And to them that sat in the region and shadow of death, To them did light spring up.

From that time began Jesus to preach, and to say, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Section 27 — The Rejection at Nazareth [Luke 4:16–30]

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And he opened the book, and found the place where it was written,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor: He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovering of sight to the blind, To set at liberty them that are bruised, To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down: and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears.

And all bare him witness, and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of his mouth: and they said, Is not this Joseph's son?

And he said unto them, Doubtless ye will say unto me this parable, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done at Capernaum, do also here in thine own country.

And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is acceptable in his own country. But of a truth I say unto you, There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there came a great famine over all the land; and unto none of them was Elijah sent, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.

And they were all filled with wrath in the synagogue, as they heard these things; and they rose up, and cast him forth out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might throw him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them went his way.

Section 28 — The Call of the First Disciples [Matt 4:18–22 / Mark 1:16–20]

And walking by the sea of Galilee, he saw two brethren, Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left the nets, and followed him.

And going on from thence he saw two other brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they straightway left the boat and their father, and followed him.

Section 29 — The Man with an Unclean Spirit in the Synagogue at Capernaum [Mark 1:21–28 / Luke 4:31–37]

And they go into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at his teaching: for he taught them as having authority, and not as the scribes.

And straightway there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus thou Nazarene? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And the unclean spirit, tearing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him.

And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What is this? a new teaching! with authority he commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they obey him. And the report of him went out straightway everywhere into all the region of Galilee round about.

Section 30 — The Healing of Peter's Mother-in-Law [Matt 8:14–15 / Mark 1:29–31 / Luke 4:38–39]

And straightway, when they were come out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever; and straightway they tell him of her: and he came and took her by the hand, and raised her up; and the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.

Section 31 — Healings at Evening: Many Brought to Jesus [Matt 8:16–17 / Mark 1:32–34 / Luke 4:40–41]

And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were sick, and them that were possessed with demons. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick with divers diseases, and cast out many demons; and he suffered not the demons to speak, because they knew him.

And he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them. And demons also came out from many, crying out, and saying, Thou art the Son of God. And rebuking them, he suffered them not to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ.

Now this came to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying,

Himself took our infirmities, and bare our diseases.

Section 32 — A Morning of Prayer; Jesus Preaches Throughout Galilee [Mark 1:35–39 / Luke 4:42–44]

And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose up and went out, and departed into a desert place, and there prayed. And Simon and they that were with him followed after him; and they found him, and say unto him, All are seeking thee.

And he saith unto them, Let us go elsewhere into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for to this end came I forth.

And the multitudes sought after him, and came unto him, and would have stayed him, that he should not go from them. But he said unto them, I must preach the good tidings of the kingdom of God to the other cities also: for therefore was I sent.

And he went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out demons.

Section 33 — The Miraculous Catch of Fish and the Call of Simon [Luke 5:1–11]

Now it came to pass, while the multitude pressed upon him and heard the word of God, that he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret; and he saw two boats standing by the lake: but the fishermen had gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the multitudes out of the boat.

And when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Put out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

And Simon answered and said, Master, we toiled all night, and took nothing: but at thy word I will let down the nets.

And when they had done this, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes; and their nets were breaking; and they beckoned unto their partners in the other boat, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.

But Simon Peter, when he saw it, fell down at Jesus's knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

For he was amazed, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken; and so were also James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon.

And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

And when they had brought their boats to land, they left all, and followed him.

Section 34 — The Cleansing of the Leper [Matt 8:2–4 / Mark 1:40–45 / Luke 5:12–16]

And it came to pass, while he was in one of the cities, behold, a man full of leprosy: and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

And he stretched forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou made clean. And straightway the leprosy departed from him.

And he charged him to tell no man: but go thy way, and show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

But so much the more went abroad the report concerning him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed of their infirmities. But he withdrew himself in the deserts, and prayed.

Appendix: Notes on Chapter Four

On the Triple Tradition in Chapter Four

Chapter four is the point at which all three Synoptics are running in close parallel for the first time. Matthew 4, Mark 1 (its closing sections), and Luke 4 share the same sequence of events with remarkable agreement: the departure into Galilee, the preaching of the kingdom, the call of the first disciples, the synagogue exorcism at Capernaum, the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, the evening healings, and the withdrawal for prayer and preaching tour. The agreement among the three is so close that this material forms one of the strongest pillars of the "two-source hypothesis" — the scholarly theory that Matthew and Luke both drew independently on Mark as a common written source.

On the Rejection at Nazareth

Luke places the rejection at Nazareth (Section 27) at the very beginning of Jesus's Galilean ministry — almost as a programmatic scene that sets the theological agenda for everything that follows. Matthew (4:13) mentions Nazareth only briefly, noting that Jesus "left Nazareth" and moved to Capernaum. Mark records the rejection at Nazareth at 6:1–6, later in his narrative sequence. Most harmonists (Robertson, Aland, Daniel) place Luke's fuller account early, as Luke intends it — as a keynote event — and treat it as either a separate incident from Mark's later account or as Luke's deliberate repositioning of a later event to the front of his narrative for thematic purposes. This harmony follows Luke's placement.

The scene itself is theologically crucial: Jesus reads from Isaiah 61 ("The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor") and announces its fulfillment in their hearing — a claim of such directness that it initially wins admiration, then provokes fury. His reference to Elijah going to a Gentile widow and Elisha cleansing a Syrian leper — implying that God's favor is not restricted to Israel — is what triggers the attempt to throw him off the cliff. This is Luke's announcement of one of his Gospel's great themes: the gospel for all peoples, not Israel alone.

On the Call of the Disciples

Matthew and Mark place the call of Simon, Andrew, James, and John after the move to Capernaum, with no prior relationship established between Jesus and these fishermen. Luke's account of the miraculous catch of fish (Section 33) — placed slightly later — provides a richer backstory: Simon has already lent his boat for preaching, and the miraculous catch produces his confession of unworthiness ("Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord") before the call to "catch men." Many harmonists treat Luke's account as a separate, fuller version of the same calling event that Matthew and Mark summarize. Others treat them as sequential: a first brief encounter (Matt/Mark) followed by a more decisive call after the miraculous catch (Luke). This harmony presents them in narrative order — the brief call (Section 28) followed by the fuller Lukan account (Section 33) — allowing both accounts to stand.

On the Healing of the Leper

The cleansing of the leper (Section 34) is the first detailed healing miracle of the Galilean ministry recorded by all three Synoptics. Two details deserve note. First, Jesus touches the leper — an act that would have rendered him ceremonially unclean under Levitical law (Leviticus 13:45–46). He does so deliberately and immediately, before speaking. Second, he commands silence and instructs the man to present himself to the priest "for a testimony unto them" — fulfilling the Mosaic protocol for lepers who had been healed (Leviticus 14:1–32). The tension between Jesus's authority over disease and his reverence for the Mosaic law is characteristic of all three Synoptics throughout their fourth chapters.

On Mark's Contribution

Mark's chapter 1 — which in the previous harmony volumes provided relatively little material (his prologue being a single verse, his birth narrative nonexistent) — comes fully into its own in chapter four. Sections 29 through 32 are primarily Markan in character: rapid, vivid, action-focused, with the characteristic Markan *euthys* ("straightway" or "immediately") driving the

narrative forward. Mark's Jesus is a man of sovereign power who moves through the world with an urgency that Matthew and Luke soften with more extended discourse. The early morning prayer scene (Section 32) — Jesus withdrawing before dawn to a solitary place — appears only in Mark and is one of the most humanly intimate details in the Synoptic tradition.

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