

# *Rethinking the Harmonization of Luke 9:18-19:28 with John 7:1-11:54*

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## I. Introduction

The benefits of assembling a chronological harmonization of the gospels have been recognized since Tatian's "Diatessaron" in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. Hundreds of harmonies have appeared, though it is now difficult and expensive to access those published before the early 1800's.

This rich heritage of harmonization may also have become one of the discipline's greatest weaknesses. It is a clear temptation for harmonists to rely too much, or even entirely, on the chronological arrangements of a predecessor. Thomas and Gundry, and Pentecost for instance have clearly based their harmonies on Robertson's. Robertson's Harmony is actually that of Broadus. Broadus leaned heavily on Clark. Clark relied on Wieseler. Other harmonies have a much shorter "genealogy". Meltebeke's harmony, for instance, is essentially a reformatting of Cheney and Ellisen's. When this occurs, the inaccuracies of one harmony can easily be carried over into another.

Today's common harmonization of Luke 9:18-19:28 with John 7:1-11:54 has fallen prey to this. A pattern of harmonizing those verses that appeared about the time of the American Civil War quickly became almost universally accepted, and continues to be so right to this day. But there are major problems with that pattern and a logical alternative to it.

Most harmonists, including myself, understand these verses to appear chronologically in each gospel. This I will not challenge. The real question of this paper concerns the common pattern of *interweaving* John's narrative with Luke's.

First, we will first consider the harmonization of only the Synoptics in this area and focus on ten key chronological mileposts. Second, we will briefly survey the broad content of John's narrative. Third, we will observe the effects of the common pattern of interweaving John with the Synoptics on these ten mileposts. Fourth, a logical alternative will be proposed, the resolution of one apparent problem, and the ease it brings to these same mileposts. Finally we will conclude with some implications for harmonistic studies.

## II. A Harmonization of the Synoptics

The following are ten key chronological mileposts in the order of their appearance in the Synoptics..

### **1. Jesus' Death and Resurrection Foretold 1<sup>st</sup> Time**

Matthew 16:21; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22

NAU Matthew 16:21

21 From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.

This is the first of three similar announcements by Jesus. Notice the opening words of the verse.

## 2. Mount of Transfiguration

Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-10; Luke 9:28-36

NAU Luke 9:30-31

30 And behold, two men were talking with Him; and they were Moses and Elijah, 31 who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

This is a reference to His death and resurrection.

## 3. Jesus' Death and Resurrection Foretold 2<sup>nd</sup> Time

Matthew 17:22-23; Mark 9:30-32; Luke 9:43b-45

NAU Matthew 17:22-23

22 And while they were gathering together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men; 23 and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day." And they were deeply grieved.

NOTICE THAT THESE FIRST THREE MILEPOSTS HAVE AN IMMINENT SENSE OF JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION IN JERUSALEM.

## 4. Half-Shekel Temple Tax

Matthew 17:24-27

NAU Matthew 17:24, 27b

24 When they came to Capernaum, those who collected the two-drachma *tax* came to Peter and said, "Does your teacher not pay the two-drachma *tax*?" 27b "...go to the sea and throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for you and Me."

The two-drachma tax was the annual half-shekel temple tax<sup>1</sup> (cf. Exodus 30:13). The Mishnah describes the collection of this tax.

"On the 15<sup>th</sup> thereof (*the month of Adar*) the tables [of the money changers] were set up in the provinces; and on the 25<sup>th</sup> thereof they were set up in the Temple."<sup>2</sup> (*italics mine*)

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<sup>1</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 45-46.

As the Pesach (Passover) lamb was to be killed at twilight on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the following month (Exodus 12:6), the 15<sup>th</sup> of Adar would be 30 days prior to Pesach. So, Matthew 17:24-27 is most naturally understood as having occurred 20 to 30 days prior to Jesus' last Pesach. Consistent with this understanding is the fact that the Synoptics mention only two Sabbaths (Luke 13:17; 14:1) *between* Matthew 17:24 and Jesus' travels from Jericho up to Jerusalem for the last time.

## 5. Jesus Begins His Resolute Journey to Jerusalem

Luke 9:51-56

NOTE THAT MATTHEW AND MARK BREAK OFF THEIR NARRATIVE RIGHT BEFORE LUKE 9:51 AND TRANSITION TO PEREA (MATTHEW 19:1-2; MARK 10:1).

NAU Matthew 19:1-2

1 When Jesus had finished these words, He departed from Galilee and came into the region of Judea beyond the Jordan; 2 and large crowds followed Him, and He healed them there.

NOW LUKE ALONE CONTINUES HIS NARRATIVE.

NKJ Luke 9:51-53

51 Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, 52 and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. 53 But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem.

56b And they went to another village.

## 6. Jesus at Mary and Martha's House

Luke 10:38-42

NAU Luke 10:38-40a

38 Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word. 40a But Martha was distracted with all her preparations...

Though Luke does not indicate the location of their home, it is *generally* understood to be Bethany by Jerusalem because of John 11:1.

NAU John 11:1

1 Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

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<sup>2</sup> Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah*, Translated from the Hebrew with Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933; reprint), Shekalim 1.3, 152.

## 7. Jesus Continues His Journey to Jerusalem

Luke 13:22

NAU Luke 13:22

22 And He was passing through from one city and village to another, teaching, and proceeding on His way to Jerusalem.

## 8. You Will Not See Me Until...

Luke 13:31-35

NAU Luke 13:31-32

31 Just at that time some Pharisees approached, saying to Him, "Go away, leave here, for Herod wants to kill You." 32 And He said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third *day* I reach My goal.'

This is clearly a figure of speech since there is at least one Sabbath (Luke 14:1) between these verses and His arrival in Jerusalem, making His journey longer than three days. But consider the following verses.

NAU Luke 13:33-35

33 "Nevertheless I must journey on today and tomorrow and the next *day*; for it cannot be that a prophet would perish outside of Jerusalem. 34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *the city* that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen *gathers* her brood under her wings, and you would not *have it!* 35 "Behold, your house is left to you *desolate*; and I say to you, you will not see Me until *the time* comes when you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'"

Jesus is clearly speaking of His Triumphal Entry the next time He will be in Jerusalem.

## 9. Jesus Again Continues His Journey to Jerusalem

Luke 17:11

NAU Luke 17:11

11 While He was on the way to Jerusalem, He was passing between Samaria and Galilee.

NIV Luke 17:11

11 Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee.

AFTER THIS MATTHEW AND MARK REJOIN LUKE IN THEIR NARRATIVES, AS JESUS HAS ARRIVED IN PEREA.

## 10. Jesus' Death and Resurrection Foretold 3<sup>rd</sup> Time

Matthew 20:17-19; Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-34

## NAU Matthew 20:17-19

17 As Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve *disciples* aside by themselves, and on the way He said to them, 18 "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, 19 and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify *Him*, and on the third day He will be raised up."

Notice the natural progression in Jesus' three announcements.

- 1<sup>ST</sup> "From that time Jesus began to show His disciples..."  
 2<sup>ND</sup> "...while they were gathering together in Galilee..."  
 3<sup>RD</sup> "As Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem..."

### III. A Brief Survey of John 7:1-11:54

- John 7:1-10:21  
 Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles)  
 September/October  
 John 10:22-42  
 Chanukkah (Feast of Dedication)  
 December  
 John 11:1-54  
 Raising of Lazarus

### IV. The Common Approach

The common approach is reasoned from two central ideas. The first idea was presented by Wieseler. Without proving that John *must* be interwoven with Luke, but instead just describing what he saw to be reasonable, he wrote,

"We must, therefore, maintain that in the present section, the portion **Lu. ix. 51**—xiii. 21, runs parallel with Joh. vii. 10—x. 42; **Lu. xiii. 22**—xvii. 10, with Joh. xi. 1—54, and lastly, **Lu. xvii. 11**—xix. 28 with Joh. xi. 55—xii. 11."<sup>3</sup> (*emphasis mine*)

This idea was quickly adopted by other harmonists. Broadus would later write in his own harmony, "Wieseler was the first to point out a possible parallel between Luke and John"<sup>4</sup>, and the specific placements by Broadus based on Wieseler's idea have become the standard today. These specific placements are shown on this overhead.

<sup>3</sup> Karl Wieseler, *A Chronological Synopsis of the Four Gospels*, (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1864), 292.

<sup>4</sup> John A. Broadus, *A Harmony of the Gospels*, in the Revised Version (New York: A.C. Armstrong and Son, 1893), 251.

# Interweaving Overhead

(according to the placements by Broadus)

Jesus' journey to Jerusalem for Sukkot in **John 7:1 - 10:21** is understood to be **identical to**:

5. Jesus Begins His Resolute Journey to Jerusalem  
[Luke 9:51-56](#)
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Jesus' presence in Jerusalem at Chanukkah in **John 10:22-42** is placed **between**:

6. Jesus at Mary and Martha's House  
[Luke 10:38-42](#)

and

7. Jesus Continues His Journey to Jerusalem  
[Luke 13:22](#)
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The raising of Lazarus in **John 11:1-54** is placed **between**:

8. You Will Not See Me Until...  
[Luke 13:31-35](#)

and

9. Jesus Again Continues His Journey to Jerusalem  
[Luke 17:11](#)
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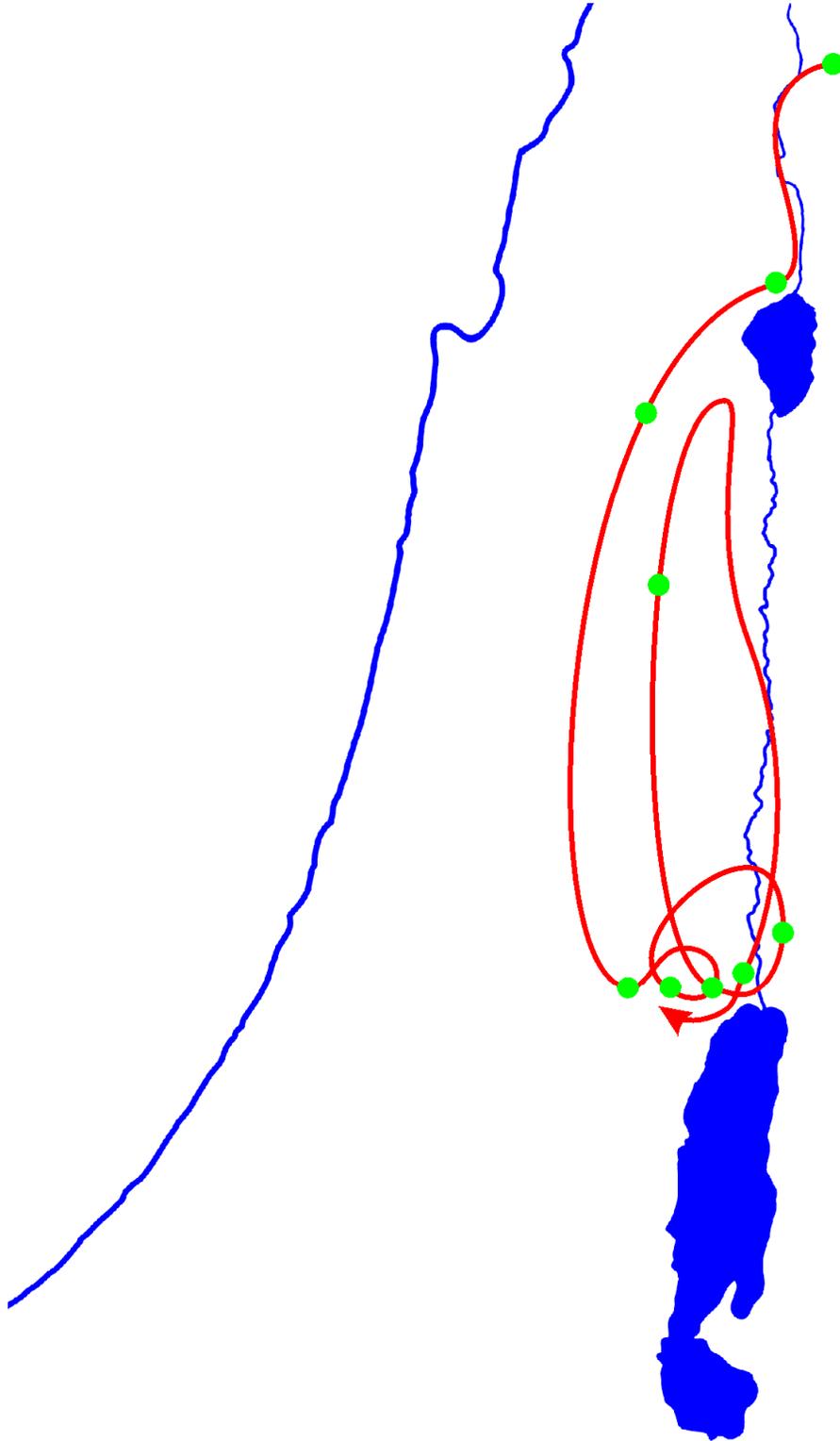
Notice that [Luke 9:51](#); [13:22](#); and [17:11](#) all mention in some way Jesus traveling to Jerusalem. These are seen as three insertion points for John's narrative.

The second idea central to the common approach is the generally accepted view from John 11:1 that Mary and Martha lived in Bethany.

Given these two ideas the rest of the common approach logically follows. But, it is not without major weaknesses. As we will see it produces strained interpretations of the chronological mileposts above.

The following overhead is a map of Jesus' last journey to Jerusalem according to the common approach of interweaving John with the Synoptics.

# Common Approach Overhead (6 months)



If it looks convoluted and confusing it is.

Jesus starts His Journey in Caesarea Philippi.

### 1. Jesus' Death and Resurrection Foretold 1<sup>st</sup> Time

Matthew 16:21; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22

### 2. Mount of Transfiguration

Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-10; Luke 9:28-36

### 3. Jesus' Death and Resurrection Foretold 2<sup>nd</sup> Time

Matthew 17:22-23; Mark 9:30-32; Luke 9:43b-45

All three of these would then refer to Jesus' final arrival in Jerusalem *at least six months in the future, after four intervening appearances in the vicinity of Jerusalem* (Sukkot, Mary and Martha's house, Chanukkah, and the raising of Lazarus)!

Next, Jesus arrives in Capernaum and Peter is approached about the Temple Tax.

### 4. Half-Shekel Temple Tax

Matthew 17:24-27

As this is placed before Sukkot and therefore at least six months prior to Pesach, how can we make sense of the statement from the Mishnah? Harold Hoehner explains.

"Although the temple tax was normally collected in Adar (the month before Passover), there is reason to believe **from Matthew 17:24-27** that these collectors of the temple tax came **after** the due-date. The text indicates that Jesus and His disciples were away from their hometown when the collection was normally made."<sup>5</sup> (*emphasis mine*)

Thus this temple tax is understood by Hoehner to be for the *previous* Passover mentioned in John 6:4.

The reason Hoehner finds in Matthew 17:24-27 was that Jesus and His disciples had been in Caesarea Philippi, but the real driving force behind his reason is that since the common approach would place this six months before Jesus' last Pesach, not 20 to 30 days, another explanation had to be found. It is an explanation of these verses, but It is a strained interpretation.

## Matthew and Mark Now Leave the Narrative

### 5. Jesus Begins His Resolute Journey to Jerusalem

Luke 9:51-56

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<sup>5</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 54.

Wieseler identifies this journey as being identical to Jesus' journey to Sukkot. But, this makes Jesus' *resolute* journey to Jerusalem last six months, be interrupted by four appearances in the vicinity of Jerusalem, and be a meandering journey.

## Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles)

John 7:1 - 10:21

### 6. Jesus at Mary and Martha's House

Luke 10:38-42

## Chanukkah (Feast of Dedication)

John 10:22-42

After Chanukkah Jesus went to Perea.

NAU John 10:40

40 And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing, and He was staying there.

### 7. Jesus Continues His Journey to Jerusalem

Luke 13:22

### 8. You Will Not See Me Until...

Luke 13:31-35

## Lazarus

John 11:1-54

After raising Lazarus from the dead in Bethany, Jesus went to Ephraim, a town approximately 12 miles north of Jerusalem.

NAU John 11:54

54 Therefore Jesus no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews, but went away from there to the country near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there He stayed with the disciples.

But remember Luke 13:35?

NAU Luke 13:35

35 "Behold, your house is left to you *desolate*; and I say to you, you will not see Me until *the time* comes when you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'"

To avoid conflict with this verse it is understood that Jesus did not enter Jerusalem after raising Lazarus, but went around Jerusalem to Ephraim.

## 9. Jesus Again Continues His Journey to Jerusalem

Luke 17:11

NAU Luke 17:11

11 While He was on the way to Jerusalem, He was passing *between* Samaria and Galilee.

NIV Luke 17:11

11 Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled *along the border between* Samaria and Galilee.

How is this explained? Broadus explains.

"It was not far to go **up** through Samaria and join in Galilee (Luke 17:11) the pilgrims from his own country who were in the habit of going to the Passover through Perea, to avoid passing through Samaria."<sup>6</sup> (*emphasis mine*)

Thomas and Gundry take this same view.

"This verse may be translated so as to indicate either that Jesus passed between Samaria and Galilee, or that He passed through Samaria and Galilee. It is difficult to know what the former might mean, except perhaps that it might describe a journey through a stretch of disputed territory between Samaria and Galilee. The editors prefer the translation "through." It fits best the probable sequence, so far as it can be reconstructed. Jesus had gone to Ephraim, a city in a remote northern district of Judea and near Samaria (Sec. 172). From there He went through Samaria and Galilee, probably to join the pilgrims traveling from Galilee, through Perea, to Jerusalem for the Passover. This explains why He would go north (through Samaria and Galilee) to go south (to Jerusalem)."<sup>7</sup>

## Matthew and Mark Now Rejoin the Narrative

Wieseler now places Matt. 19:1-2 and Mk. 10:1 here.

NAU Matthew 19:1-2

1 When Jesus had finished these words, He departed from Galilee and came into the region of Judea beyond the Jordan; 2 and large crowds followed Him, and He healed them there.

However, the words "Jesus had finished" were those spoken six months prior, and Jesus had just come from an intervening trip to Perea that Matthew and Mark overlook.

## 10. Jesus' Death and Resurrection Foretold 3<sup>rd</sup> Time

Matthew 20:17-19; Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-34

<sup>6</sup> Broadus, 252.

<sup>7</sup> Robert L. Thomas and Stanley N. Gundry, *A Harmony of the Gospels*, (New York:Harper and Row, 1978), 161.

This 3<sup>rd</sup> announcement gives no hint of the six month interval of time since Jesus' 2<sup>nd</sup> announcement. This 3<sup>rd</sup> announcement also has a much different meaning than the first two because Jesus here speaks of His *imminent* arrival in Jerusalem, but in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Jesus was speaking of His *distant* arrival in Jerusalem.

## Overview of the Common Approach

Interweaving John with the Synoptics in this area produces strained interpretations in several passages that are not native to the Synoptic wording. And, why didn't the Synoptics mention Jesus' other appearances the vicinity of Jerusalem?

There are variations to this interweaving among harmonists who follow the general idea of the common approach, but they are all variations on a theme. Clark understands the first part of Jesus' trip to Sukkot to be identical with that in Luke 9:51-56, places the rest of Sukkot and Chanukkah before Luke 13:10, John 11:1-6 before Luke 14:1, and John 11:7-54 before Luke 17:11. Greenleaf equates the first part of Sukkot with Luke 9:51-56, then places the rest of Sukkot, Chanukkah and Lazarus before Luke 13:22. Heim places Sukkot and Chanukkah just before Luke 9:51 and Lazarus after Jericho! Kerr makes Jesus' trip to Sukkot identical to that in Luke 9:51-56, but Channukah is placed just prior to Luke 15:1, and Lazarus before John 17:11. Stevens and Burton break before Luke 9:51; 11:1; and 17:11 to insert Sukkot, Chanukkah, and Lazarus. The point is, even with the common approach there is no firm agreement.

## V. An Alternate Approach

The first idea central to the common approach is that that John 7:1-11:54 should be interwoven with the Synoptics. This interweaving is *not* required by the text of the Gospels, as can be quickly demonstrated.

A formal parallel exists in a harmonization of the Gospels when the same events and/or words are recorded by two or more Evangelists. These have similar context and language. But there are no demonstrable parallels between John 7:1-11:54 and the Synoptics. Wieseler did use the word "parallel" when he wrote,

"We must, therefore, maintain that in the present section, the portion Lu. ix. 51—xiii. 21, runs **parallel** with Joh. vii. 10—x. 42; Lu. xiii. 22—xvii.10, with Joh. xi. 1—54, and lastly, Lu. xvii. 11—xix. 28 with Joh. xi. 55—xii. 11."<sup>8</sup> (*emphasis mine*)

However, when these verses are closely examined no formal parallel can be clearly demonstrated between John and the Synoptics. Luke 9:51; 13:22; and 17:11 do speak of Jesus traveling to Jerusalem, but this evidence alone is far too meager to establish a formal parallel with John's narrative.

Since there are no formal parallels between John 7:1-11:54 and the Synoptics another harmonization option is viable. Placing this section of John entirely before the first chronological milepost would eliminate the interpretive problems that are brought on by interweaving John with the Synoptics.

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<sup>8</sup> Wieseler, 292.

The second idea central to the common approach is that Mary and Martha lived in Bethany near Jerusalem. If this was true, then Luke's travelogue would clearly be somewhat circuitous as Jesus would be in Galilee (Luke 9:51-56), then in Bethany (Luke 10:38-42), then in Samaria and Galilee again (Luke 17:11). But is it true? Consider carefully the one verse on which this understanding is based.

KJV John 11:1

1 Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.

NKJ John 11:1

1 Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.

NAU John 11:1

1 Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

NIV John 11:1

1 Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

NLT John 11:1

1 A man named Lazarus was sick. He lived in Bethany with his sisters, Mary and Martha.

But two different prepositions are used here. and are hidden by the English translations. I will illustrate from the New American Standard.

NAU John 11:1

1 Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of (ἀπὸ) Bethany, (ἐκ) the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

There is only one other place in the Gospels, also in John, that these two prepositions are used together in a similar geographic construction.

NAU John 1:44

44 Now Philip was from (ἀπὸ) Bethsaida, (ἐκ) of the city of Andrew and Peter.

But, we most naturally understand that Peter lived in Capernaum, not Bethsaida!

NAU Mark 1:29-30a

29 And *immediately* after they came out of the synagogue (*at Capernaum*), they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30a Now Simon's mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever (*italicized comment mine*)

The lexicon by Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich says that in John 1:44 ἀπό indicates Philip's local origin<sup>9</sup> and ἐκ indicates Philip's family's origin<sup>10</sup>.

Murray Harris expresses an opposing view when he discusses the exegetical dangers relating to prepositions and theology in the Greek New Testament. He warns about the failure to make adequate allowance for a writer's stylistic variation.

"It seems arbitrary and unwarranted, for example, to distinguish... between *apo* (applying to domicile) and *ek* (applying to birthplace) in the Fourth Gospel (see E. A. Abbott, *Johannine Grammar*, 1906, §§ 2289 f.)"<sup>11</sup> But it hardly seems "arbitrary and unwarranted" to consider distinguishing between these two prepositions when there is so much riding on their interpretation. Jesus' last journey to Jerusalem will either be circuitous or direct and the ten chronological mileposts cited above either straightforward or obscure depending on those two prepositions in John 11:1.

E. A. Abbott, cited by Harris, discusses John 1:44 and 11:1 then writes,

"From the Johannine combinations of ἀπό and ἐκ above we may conclude with certainty that John makes a distinction between them."<sup>12</sup>

In fact Harris, in his *very next paragraph* warning against the disregard of possible distinctions in prepositions, says,

"This danger is the opposite of the last. A writer must be permitted to alter his terminology either to vary his style but not change his meaning *or* to express a distinction in sense." (*emphasis his*)

Perhaps the most significant harmonist of the last 170 years, Edward Greswell, composed a Greek harmony in the early 1800's keyed to approximately 2,500 pages in four volumes titled, "Dissertations upon the Principles and Arrangement of an Harmony of the Gospels. He begins "Dissertation XXXII (On the village of Martha and Mary)" as follows:

"That the scene of the incident, which is recorded *in* Luke x. 38-42, was some village of Galilee... appears to me so certain a point, that I know not how it can reasonably be questioned..."<sup>13</sup>

He then takes 35 pages to prove his point.

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<sup>9</sup> Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., trans. and ed. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 86 IV.1.b.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 234 3.b.

<sup>11</sup> Murray J. Harris, "Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 1978.

<sup>12</sup> Edwin A. Abbott, *Johannine Grammar*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1906), 227-230.

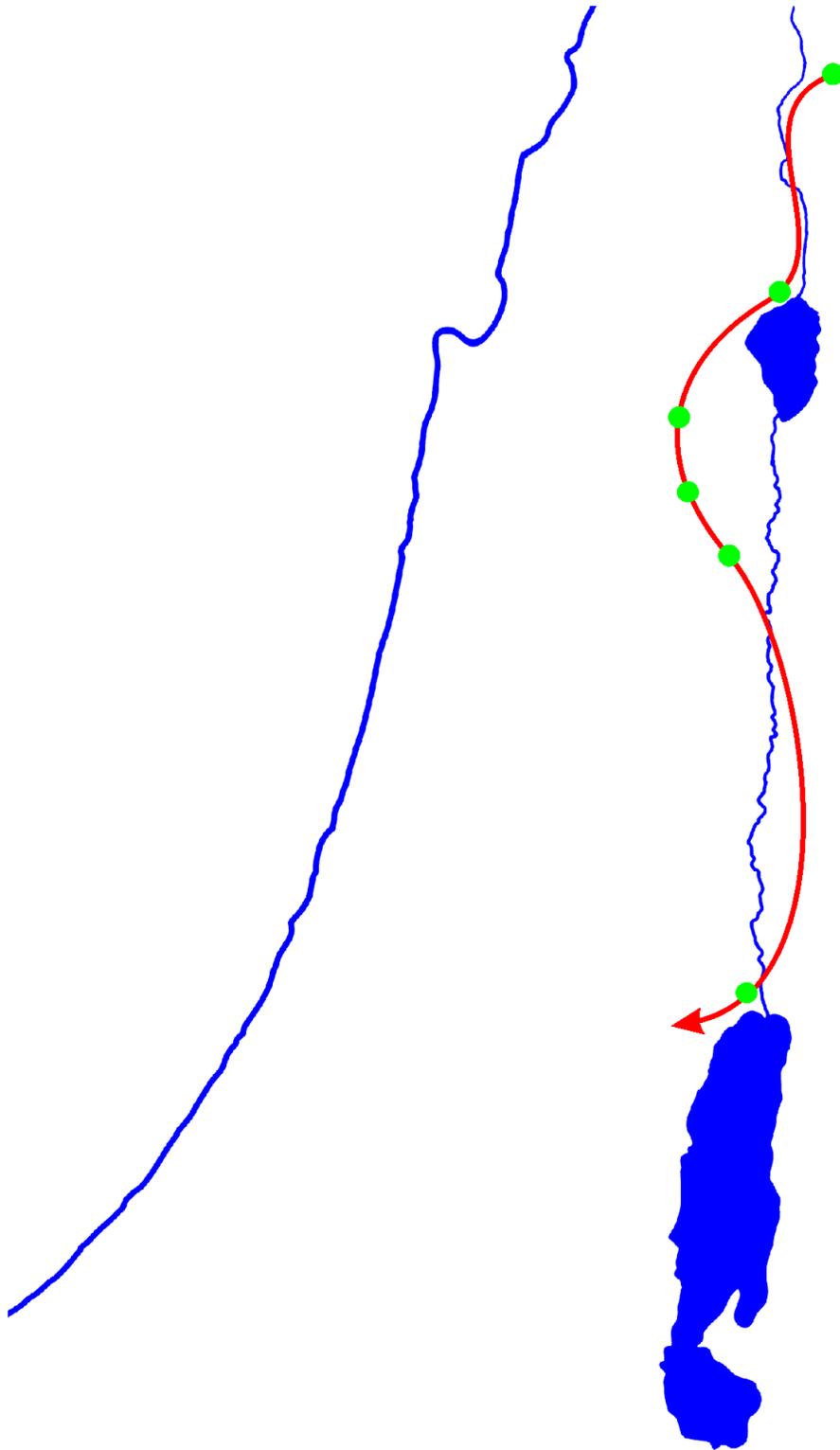
<sup>13</sup> Edward Greswell, *Dissertations upon the Principles and Arrangement of an Harmony of the Gospels*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1837), II: 545.

There *is* ample reason to understand in both John 1:44 and 11:1 that ἀπό indicates residence while ἐκ indicates birthplace.

John 11:1 does *not* establish that Mary and Martha lived in Bethany. Instead, the harmonization of the Synoptics would indicate that they lived somewhere in southern Galilee.

Once the two central ideas supporting the common approach are removed (the interweaving of John 7:1-11:54 with the Synoptics and the identification of Mary and Martha's home as being in Bethany), that approach collapses. Jesus' last journey to Jerusalem becomes straightforward, all the forced interpretations vanish, and these ten chronological mileposts in the Synoptics assume their most natural and native meaning!

# Alternate Approach Overhead (1 month)



Jesus starts His last journey to Jerusalem in Caesarea Philippi about a month prior to His crucifixion.

1. **Jesus' Death and Resurrection Foretold 1<sup>st</sup> Time**  
Matthew 16:21; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22
2. **Mount of Transfiguration**  
Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-10; Luke 9:28-36
3. **Jesus' Death and Resurrection Foretold 2<sup>nd</sup> Time**  
Matthew 17:22-23; Mark 9:30-32; Luke 9:43b-45

Jesus arrives in Capernaum

4. **Half-Shekel Temple Tax**  
Matthew 17:24-27  
(20 to 30 days before Pesach)

Matthew and Mark Now Leave the Narrative

5. **Jesus Begins His Resolute Journey to Jerusalem**  
Luke 9:51-56
6. **Jesus at Mary and Martha's House**  
Luke 10:38-42
7. **Jesus Continues His Journey to Jerusalem**  
Luke 13:22
8. **You Will Not See Me Until...**  
Luke 13:31-35
9. **Jesus Again Continues His Journey to Jerusalem**  
Luke 17:11  
(Jesus travels along the border between Samaria and Galilee.)

Matthew and Mark Now Rejoin the Narrative  
(in Perea)

10. **Jesus' Death and Resurrection Foretold 3<sup>rd</sup> Time**  
Matthew 20:17-19; Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-34

## VI. Conclusion

There is a clear alternative to interweaving John 7:1-11:54 with Matthew 16:13-20:34; Mark 8:27-10:52; and Luke 9:18-19:28. That is to place John's verses entirely before

those in the Synoptics. The Synoptic passages then assume their natural meanings, and there are no new problems created.

The question that needs to be asked is, "So what? What real difference does it make if we accept the alternative approach or maintain the common approach?"

First, these verses represent 25% of all the verses in the Gospels. For over a century and a half we have struggled with an inaccurate harmonization for them and the interpretive difficulties that approach brings to the text. This is no small matter.

Second, it would suggest that we should take a closer look at the common harmonization pattern we have accepted for the rest of the Gospels and ask, "Why have we made these placements." "Are there better alternatives?" Original work (not merely quoting previous harmonists) and healthy debate on harmonization issues must be rejoined. Just a short survey of currently published works will show that the common approach to Jesus' last journey to Jerusalem is almost universally represented in harmonies, commentaries, study bibles, bible atlases, etc. Have other harmonization issues followed the same path?

Inaccurate harmonizations will change our understanding of the context of passages. They will make it more difficult to follow the flow of Christ's public ministry. The "so what" is major.

Allow me to suggest a few other harmonization issues we should revisit. (1) Could a persuasive case be made for a two and a half year public ministry instead of a three and a half, and this without the historical error of chronologically transposing John 5 and 6? (2) Is there a better way to outline Jesus' Galilean ministry? (3) Why did Matthew arrange chapters 8-13 differently than Mark and Luke? (4) Can a case be made that the Gospels are essentially chronological in nature?

I would like to finish with another quote from Edward Greswell that would remind us to always stay true to the Gospel narrative.

"In the course of this examination, during which I had to consult some of the most popular Harmonies, I could not but observe in them such remarkable inconsistencies as were abundantly sufficient to convince my own mind that the principles, upon which they had proceeded, could not be right. The dissatisfaction produced by this discovery determined me to lay them aside, and to take the four original narratives, and nothing more, into my hands, with a view to frame out of them, for myself, a system which, if it possessed no other merit, might at least avoid such difficulties as had appeared so glaringly and so palpably in the cases alluded to."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 1:xii.

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