

The Bible and its Authors

“Synoptic” Gospels

Question:

I have often heard the gospels referred to as “synoptic.” What is a “synoptic” and why are the gospels referred to by that term?

Our Answer:

The word “synoptic” comes from the root “syn,” meaning “together with” and “optic,” meaning “seeing.” Thus, the word “synoptic” literally means “seeing together.” Matthew, Mark, and Luke are all referred to as “synoptic” gospels because they take a common viewpoint in relating the life of Christ. In other words they are all recording essentially the same events. Because John’s gospel is so unique it is not considered a synoptic writing.