

WHY FOUR GOSPELS?

4 AUDIENCES
4 PURPOSES

4 PORTRAITS
4 EMPHASES



MATTHEW – Jews

Jesus is the MESSIAH/KING
who fulfills Old Testament
prophecy & expectations

Key Verses: Matthew 1:1; 16:16; 20:28

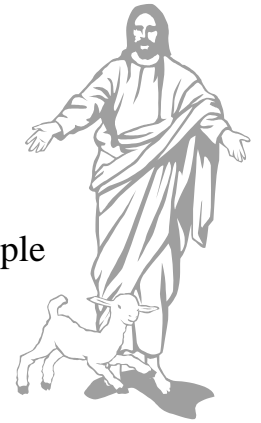
Key Words: FULFILLED

LUKE – Hellenists (Greeks)

Jesus is the perfect SON OF MAN
who came to save & minister to all people
through the power of the Holy Spirit

Key Verse: Luke 19:10

Key Concept: SON OF MAN

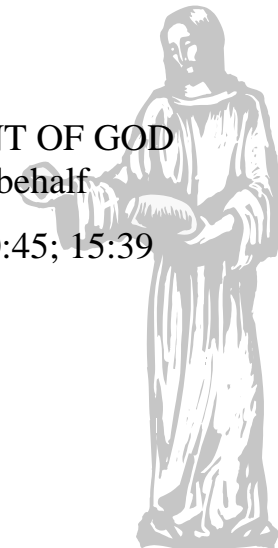


MARK – Romans

Jesus is the suffering SERVANT OF GOD
Who actively ministers on our behalf

Key Verses: Mark 1:1; 8:29; 10:45; 15:39

Key Word: IMMEDIATELY

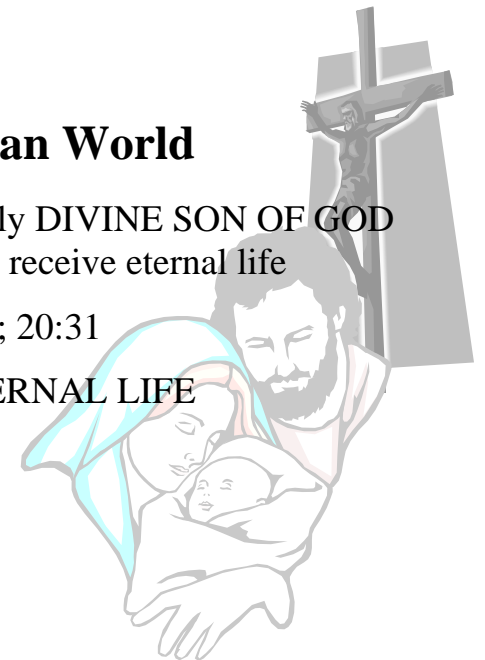


JOHN – Greek/Roman World

Jesus is the fully human, fully DIVINE SON OF GOD
in whom we must believe to receive eternal life

Key Verses: John 3:16; 8:58; 20:31

Key Words: BELIEVE; ETERNAL LIFE



A Proposal for Dating the Books of the New Testament (Danny Akin)

Matthew	40 – 55	
Mark	65 – 70	
Luke	57 – 61	
John	80 – 95	
Acts	61 – 63	
Romans	56 – 57	From Corinth; 3 rd Missionary Journey and after I & II Corinthians
I Corinthians	55 – 56	
II Corinthians	55 – 57	
Galatians	48 – 49	Possibly 1 st Pauline Epistle if one accepts the South Galatian theory
*Ephesians	60 – 63	
*Philippians	60 – 63	
*Colossians	60 – 63	
I Thessalonians	50 – 52	Earliest Pauline Epistle after Galatians
II Thessalonians	50 – 52	
**I Timothy	62 – 66	
**II Timothy	64 – 68	Last Pauline letter
**Titus	62 – 66	
Philemon	60 – 63	
Hebrews	67 – 69	
James	40s	
I Peter	62 – 64	
II Peter	64 – 68	
I John	80 – 95	
II John	80 – 95	
III John	80 – 95	
Jude	65 – 80	Accepts II Peter as prior to Jude
Revelation	90 – 96	
*Prison Epistles		
**Pastoral Epistles		

Why Are There Four Gospels?

There is no one definitive biography of Jesus Christ in existence, but rather four separate and complementary accounts. Why? Because a picture, or portrait, is more complete when viewed from several different angles. The biography of an important person is not really complete unless we have accounts from various perspectives. Different persons would see things from a different viewpoint and thus give us a little different slant on his life. Similarly, each of the four Gospel writers looks at Jesus from his own distinct angle. The four Gospels are not biographies in the modern sense. A large portion of Jesus' life is skipped over, and all four Gospels give a significant amount of their writing to His passion week (e.g. Mark 11-16 covers the week leading to the cross and resurrection).

1. Matthew

Matthew, writing to the Jews, was interested in establishing Jesus' Messiahship and the regal rights of Jesus as King of the Jews. In doing so he traced the genealogy of Jesus back to David and Abraham (1:1). He set forth Christ as the Redeemer-King, the Servant-King of Israel, the Messiah promised to the forefathers. The inscription "Behold, your king" (Zech. 9:9) could be written over Matthew's Gospel.

2. Mark

Mark, writing to the Romans, was interested in capturing those shots of Jesus that showed Him as a man of action and the servant of the Lord. Consequently, we have no genealogy in Mark's Gospel; after all, who is interested in the lineage of a servant? What Mark had his eye on was the activity of Jesus. This would appeal to a practical Roman citizen. Over Mark's Gospel the inscription might read "Behold, My Servant" (Isa. 42:1; compare Zech. 3:8).

3. Luke

Luke was writing primarily to a Greek or Hellenistic audience and focused on Jesus' humanity. Consequently, Luke traced Christ's genealogy all the way back to Adam (Luke 3:23-38). Throughout his account, Luke pictured the Son of man as a Kinsman-Redeemer to the whole human race, as one who was willing to save men of every nation. Over his Gospel we might inscribe "Behold, a man" (Zech. 6:12).

4. John

John wrote to the world and in a sense a timeless, universal audience. More than the other writers, he stressed the deity of Christ and His unique relationship with the Father. Over his Gospel the words "Behold, your God" (Isa. 35:4) could be written in letters of gold.

Some Basic Presuppositions Concerning Our Gospels

1. They are historical and not mythological accounts.
2. They are inspired by God and written by men. Therefore, they are:
 - a. Inerrant in the original document—2 Tim. 3:16
 - b. Inspired verbally and plenary—Matt. 5:17-18; 2 Pet. 1:21
3. Because they are written by men, the style, content, etc. will vary, but all of it will be true.
4. The Gospels are more than thematic biographical studies. They are Gospels. (The Gospels are not biographies in the modern sense.)
5. Portions may be condensed and summarized and not exhaustive accounts (e.g. The Sermon on the Mount in Matt. 5–7)

Verbal, plenary inspiration producing infallible, inerrant documents demands what is said is truth and true (it corresponds to reality) to fact, not that it must be either exhaustive in an account, or exact in a quotation (there are no quotation marks in Scripture), though both may be the case in certain instances.

6. The Gospels are more concerned about Christ's death than His life (over 1/3 deal with the final week of His life).

The Gospels

The four “Gospels” are our main source of knowledge for the life of Christ. But the Gospels are more than just historical documents. The Greek term for gospel is *euangelion*, which means “good news” or “good message.” The Gospels provide us with a message of good news, worthy to be proclaimed.

William Barclay offers this definition: “A gospel is not a historical document and nothing else; but a gospel is an attempt to present the portrait and teaching of Jesus in such a way that those who read it will also take Him as Savior, Master, and Lord.”

Four Gospels

Each of the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) give us a thematic portrait or picture that focus on the earthly ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Each one has distinctive viewpoint or perspective, and each is authored with a particular audience in view.

Matthew

Audience: Jews

Picture of Christ: King/Messiah

Mark

Audience: Romans

Picture of Christ: The Perfect Servant

Luke

Audience: Greeks

Picture of Christ: Son of Man (Perfect Man)

John

Audience: The World

Picture of Christ: Son of God (Diety)

John and the Synoptic Gospels

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are referred to as the “synoptic” Gospels. The term means to “see together.” It is an appropriate term because these three Gospels have a common viewpoint and similar characteristics. In contrast, John is very different. The chart below highlights some of these differences.

Topics	Synoptics	John
Portrait of Christ	God – <u>Man</u>	<u>God</u> – Man
Perspective	More Historical	More Theological
Unique Material	Matthew – 42%; Mark – 7%; Luke – 59%	92% unique
Geography	Focus on Galilean ministry (North)	Focus on Judean ministry (South)
Teaching Method	Parables	Extended Discourse
Chronology	Mention of one Passover	Mention of three (maybe four) Passovers
Relation to other Gospels	Complementary	Supplementary

Comparison of the Four Gospels

Topics	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Author	Tax Collector	Missionary	Physician	Fisherman
Original Audience	Jews	Romans	Hellenist (Greeks)	All Persons
Key Verse	16:16	10:45	19:10	20:31
Outstanding Feature	5 Major Discourses 5 Major Narratives	Miracles	Parables	Signs
Arrangement of Material	Topical	Generally Chronological	Generally Chronological	Topical/Theological
Tone	Prophetic	Practical	Historical	Theological
Genealogy	To Abraham	No Genealogy	To Adam	No Genealogy
Quotations from Old Testament	53	36	25	20
Allusions to Old Testament	76	27	42	105
Unique Material	42%	7%	59%	92%
Broad Division	Synoptics Gospels: Emphasizes the Humanity of Christ			Supplemental Gospel: Emphasizes the Deity

Why Should We Trust the Gospels? **Luke 1:1-4**

- I. The Authors Examined the Evidence 1:1
 - A. There were many sources
 - B. The events were sure

- II. The Authors Interviewed Eyewitnesses 1:2
 - A. The witnesses spoke of what they saw
 - B. The witnesses spoke as servants of the Word

- III. The Authors Wrote with Exactness 1:3-4
 - A. They wrote striving for accuracy 1:3
 - B. They wrote seeking our certainty 1:4