

TESTS

Test #1: Overview (Fill in the blanks)

(a) The four Gospels record the life of Jesus, each from a different _____.

(b) Three Gospels are called synoptic (literally, "_____") because they present the life of Christ from basically the same _____ point of view. They are Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

(c) John presents the life of Christ from a _____ viewpoint, highlighting seven _____ and seven _____ of Christ.

Test #2: The Gospels

(Fill in the blanks concerning Jesus' ministry as presented in the four gospels).

(a) Matthew was a Jew, writing to an audience of Jews to convince them that Jesus was the Messiah, the _____ of the Jews.

(b) Mark was a Gentile, writing to Roman Christians, presenting Jesus as a perfect _____.

(c) Luke wrote to a Greek audience to convince them that Jesus was the perfect _____.

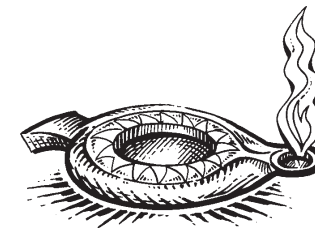
(d) John wrote to a universal audience to convince them that Jesus was the _____.

BASIC BIBLE STUDY

An Introductory Guide To Understanding The Scriptures

PART EIGHTEEN

A Comparison Of The Four Gospels



"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path"
PSALM 119:105

The greater the person, the more books written about him after he dies. You find a great many books written about leaders such as Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Winston Churchill. The reason is that different authors have different perspectives and different pieces of information about great persons. Thomas Jefferson's key political exploits including the writing of the Declaration of Independence. He was the third president of the US. These facts are well known.

What most people are less aware about are Jefferson's abilities as an astronomer or as a musician or as a farmer. A book exists entitled 'The Domestic Life of Thomas Jefferson.' It focuses on his home, his family, and his daily habits at Monticello, the plants he cultivated, the foods he preferred, the manner in which he entertained his friends, and so on. It hardly touches on his political life. It is refreshing that someone chose to write about Jefferson's life from a perspective other than his political accomplishments.

COMPARISON OF THE FOUR GOSPELS



WHY FOUR GOSPELS?

The question is often asked why there are four Gospels in the New Testament. People wonder why there should be four books at the beginning of the New Testament telling what they conceive to be essentially the same story. Why is there not one exhaustive, chronological biography of the Lord Jesus Christ? The answer is very simple: these books were inspired by the Spirit of God and written by His chosen human penmen to meet specific needs. They were addressed to real people in real situations who needed some specific aspect of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ to be emphasised to them.

These four men - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John - were writing for different audiences. Matthew was a Jew and a tax collector. Luke was a Gentile and a physician. They would each have significantly different perspectives on the life of Jesus, and by having books

ministry, and particularly three Passover feasts. He works three miracles in Galilee, and three in Jerusalem. Twice three days is He in the neighbourhood of John; three days are covered by the narrative of Lazarus, and six by the fatal Passover. He utters three Sayings on the Cross, and appears thrice after the Resurrection."

Seven times He says "I am," culminating in the thrice-repeated "I am" in **8:24, 28, 58**.

THE SEVEN "I AM'S" OF CHRIST

23 times in this Gospel Jesus uses that mighty statement of **Exodus 3**, "I AM." The "I AM" is a declaration of His absolute deity. He is Jehovah, and seven times He attaches to that "I AM" a glorious metaphor:

- (1) "I am the bread" (**6:35**);
- (2) "I am the light" (**8:12**);
- (3) "I am the door" (**10:7**);
- (4) "I am the good shepherd" (**10:11**);
- (5) "I am the resurrection, and the life" (**11:25**);
- (6) "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (**14:6**); and
- (7) "I am the true vine" (**15:1**).

These are sovereign words by which Christ claimed and established His true deity.

JOHN 3:16

The most frequently quoted verse of the Bible, **John 3:16**, contains the four most important words of Christianity, - world, gave, believeth, and life. Incidentally, the initial letters of the words in this verse, "God," "only-begotten," "Son," "perish," "eternal," and "life," spell "G-O-S-P-E-L."

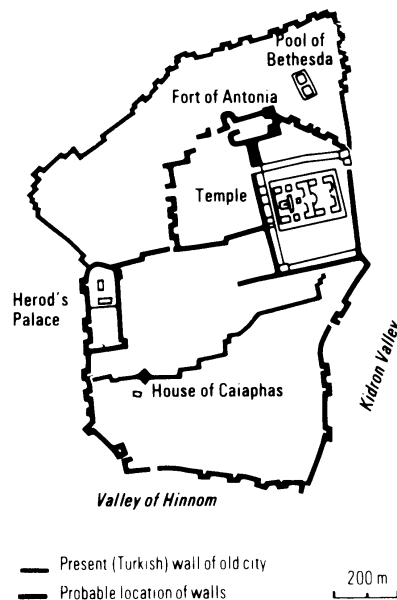
Summary:

**John wrote to a universal audience
to convince them that Jesus was the Son of God.**

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Everything is directed to the end in view, to prove that Jesus was God. "Witness" is one of the keywords of the Book, occurring about 16 times, and calls attention to the word of the Baptist, of the Evangelist, of Philip, of Nathaniel, of Nicodemus, of the Samaritan Woman, of the Nobleman, of Martha, of the Scriptures, of the Works, of Christ Himself, and of the Father, in attestation of our Lord's Divinity.

- There are in this Gospel no scribes, no lepers, no publicans, and no demoniacs.
- John does *not* narrate a single parable; and of the eight miracles recorded five are peculiar to this Gospel.
- John regards all subjects in the light of their absolute antitheses: light and darkness, life and death, spirit and flesh, heaven and earth, truth and error, love and hate, Christ and devil, God and world.
- In the use of the title "the Word [Logos]" for Christ, John stands alone.



JERUSALEM IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

The arrangement of the Book is throughout constructed with reference to the sacred numbers three and seven. "Jesus is thrice in Galilee, thrice in Judea, twice three feasts take place during His

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written by both of them, we have a more complete picture. The same is true of Mark and John. Therefore **Matthew, Mark, Luke and John**, are really four records of one Gospel. **There are some differences between them, but these are not discrepancies ... contrasts do not necessarily mean contradictions!**

Together these complementary accounts provide a rich and clear picture of Jesus. **Matthew, Mark, and Luke** are called the Synoptic Gospels (literally, "seen together") because, in contrast to **John**, they view Christ's life from much the same viewpoint and share many common details. **John** is different from the Synoptic Gospels and stands alone as a unique picture of the life of Christ.

THE GOSPELS COMPARED AND CONTRASTED				
Topics	The Synoptic Gospels			John
	Matthew	Mark	Luke	
Probable Date	A. D. 58-68	A. D. 55-65	A. D. 60-68	A. D. 80-90
Place of Writing	Syria Antioch or Palestine	Rome	Rome/Greece	Ephesus
Original Audience	Jewish mind (Religious)	Roman mind (Pragmatic)	Greek mind (Idealistic)	Universal
Theme	Messiah-King	Servant-Redeemer	Perfect Man	Son of God
Traditional Picture of Christ (cf. Ezek. 1:10; Rev. 4:6-8)	The Lion (strength, authority)	The Bull (service, power)	The Man (wisdom, character)	The Eagle (deity, person)
Portrait of Christ	God-man			God-man
Perspective	Historical			Theological
Unique Material	Less unique (Matthew, 42%; Mark, 7%; Luke, 59%)			More unique (92%)
Chronology	Only one Passover mentioned			Three or four Passovers mentioned
Geography	Concentrates on Galilean ministry			Concentrates on Judean ministry
Discourse Material	More public			More private
Teaching Method	Parables			Allegories
Teaching Emphasis	More on ethical, practical teachings			More on the person of Christ
Relationship to Other Gospels	Complementary			Supplementary

THE KEYNOTE OF ALL FOUR GOSPELS

The word "Gospel" means "Good News," and this meaning sufficiently indicates the scope, content, and value of these Records. All the Biblical Writings give news, but they do not all give good news. This Good News is that God has manifested Himself in time and in flesh for the redemption of sinful men. Each of the four Gospels records this Good News.

ORDER OF THE FOUR GOSPELS

It is not possible to fix with certainty the dates of these Records, but the earliest is not thought to have appeared before 50 A.D., and the latest was not after 95 A.D. Unquestionably the first to appear was MARK, and the last, JOHN, and of the other two, MATTHEW is prior to LUKE.

MATTHEW

Keyword: SOVEREIGNTY.

“BEHOLD THY KING!”

Written in Judea, for Jews.

Lion-like aspect

THE GOSPEL OF POWER.

(α) OVERVIEW

Matthew is the Gospel best suited to serve as the bridge between the Old Testament and the New. Matthew presents Jesus as Israel’s promised Messianic king. It was written by a Jew to convince a Jewish audience, and therefore it has a strong Jewish flavour.

Internal evidence shows that he wrote mainly for his own countrymen, the Jews.

- Evidence of this is found in his references to Jerusalem, to David, to the Kingdom;
- Matthew makes a special effort to demonstrate how all the significant events in the life of Jesus - His birth, birthplace, home, ministry, and death - directly fulfilled Old Testament prophecy, and he quotes from the Old Testament more than any other Gospel writer does (65 times).
- He traces the genealogy of Christ back to Abraham, and no further, in showing Jesus’ legal right to the throne of David.
- Matthew alone calls Jerusalem the “Holy City,” and the “Holy Place,” and the “City of the Great King.” 5 times he calls our Lord “the Son of David.” Only Jews could appreciate the significance of such references.

that it is not reliably historical.

(d) OCCASION & PURPOSE

John’s theme is clearly outlined In his Prologue (1:1-18), and his motive is as clearly indicated in his concluding words (20:31: “These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name.” Chap.21 is an Appendix). From the latter we learn that the Gospel was written to show that Jesus is God, with a view to the creation of faith in the readers and the impartation of eternal life to them.

John’s Gospel is designed to show that Jesus was the Divine Son; his First Epistle is designed to set forth the Divine Son as Jesus; and his Apocalypse (Revelation) unfolds the power and glory of Jesus Christ, the Divine Son. Nothing is more profound or sublime, so awe-inspiring and comforting, than these three Writings.

John indicated that he was selective in his choice of material (20:30). He chose certain signs to prove that Jesus was worthy of our faith. Whereas Matthew clearly wrote for a Jewish audience and Mark and Luke seem to have had the Gentile world (Roman and Greek) in mind, John’s Gospel appears to be directed toward a universal audience. **John wanted to convince his Jewish readers that Jesus is the Messiah and his Gentile readers that Jesus is the Son of God.** He wrote not so much to present new information as to confront his readers with the necessity of embracing Christ and His salvation so that they might receive eternal life.

(e) FEATURES

Almost all the features of this Gospel are distinctive.

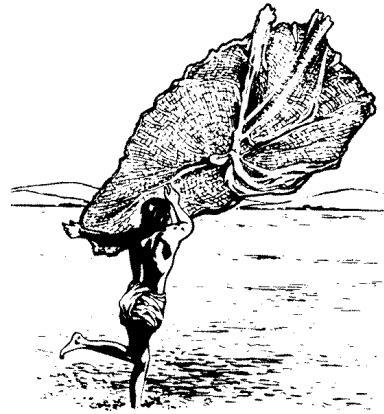
- John alone gives us a glimpse into the first year of our Lord’s ministry (2-4);
- he alone records the great Discourses on the New Birth, the Living Water, the Bread of Life, the Good Shepherd, and the Light of the World;
- he alone records at length the momentous ‘Upper Room Discourse’ and events, and the great Intercessory Prayer (13-17).

In John there is no genealogy, no birth, no boyhood, no growth, no baptism, no temptation, and no Gethsemane.

In addition to the seven signs, John records seven great sayings of Christ that begin with the words "I am."

(b) AUTHORSHIP

Strictly speaking, the fourth Gospel, like the other three, is anonymous. The author is identified only as the disciple "whom Jesus loved" (13:23; 20:2; 21:7; cf. 19:26). A process of elimination leaves the apostle John as the most likely candidate.



John and his brother James were sons of Zebedee; Jesus nicknamed them "Sons of Thunder" (Mark 3:17). Both were Galilean fishermen, prior to their call by Jesus (John 1:19-51). A comparison of several texts suggests that they were also first cousins to Jesus. (This would help explain Jesus' command from the cross for John to take care of His mother Mary; 19:27). Both James and John were selected as apostles (Mark 3:16-19) and, with Peter, served as

the inner circle of that group (e.g. Mark 5:37; 9:32; 14:33). Most scholars believe that John was "the disciple whom Jesus loved," or the apostle to whom Christ was closest.

John became one of the leaders in the early church at Jerusalem along with Peter and James (the half-brother of Christ, not the brother of John who became an early martyr) (Galatians 2:9). There is a strong tradition that John later spent many years labouring in the church at Ephesus that Paul had founded. John is believed to have died in exile on Patmos, an island off the coast of Asia Minor (cf. Revelation 1:9-11).

(c) STYLE

John's style differs greatly from that of the Three Synoptists. The language is Greek, but the style is Hebrew. John uses fewer words than any of the Synoptists, but he uses them to great purpose. His essential thoughts and images are few, but he repeats these again and again with strange impressiveness. The order is not chronological, but is determined by the author's purpose. The Gospel is essentially philosophical, theological, spiritual, but this is not to say

(b) AUTHORSHIP

Each of the four Gospels is anonymous in the sense that none specifically identifies the author, as many other New Testament books do (for example, Romans 1:14). Old Greek manuscripts we possess title the first Gospel, "According to Matthew."

Matthew, also known as Levi (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27), was a publican - a Jewish tax collector who collected taxes for the occupying Roman government. The tax collectors were despised because of both their collaboration with the Romans, something no 'good' Jew would do, and their greed (they were allowed to keep as profit any money they could collect above what they had promised the Romans). As a tax collector, Matthew was (humanly speaking) one of the least likely people in Israel to be chosen to serve as an apostle (9:13; Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27) or to write one of the four Gospels. However, evidence supports Matthew's authorship of the first Gospel.

From the earliest times the ancient Church clearly and unanimously identified Matthew as the author. **A number of internal indications also support authorship by this tax collector.** For example,

- the first Gospel has more references to money than do any of the other three Gospels.
- Three terms used in Matthew to describe money are found nowhere else in the New Testament (17:24, 17:27, 18:24).
- Matthew shows his Christian humility by continually referring to himself as "Matthew the tax collector."

(c) DATE

A date before A.D.70 is probable since:

- (1) the destruction of Jerusalem is predicted in Matthew 24,
- (2) the Gospel does not indicate that Jerusalem had fallen, and
- (3) references to Jerusalem as the "Holy City" (4:5; 27:53) imply its continued existence.

(d) OCCASION & PURPOSE

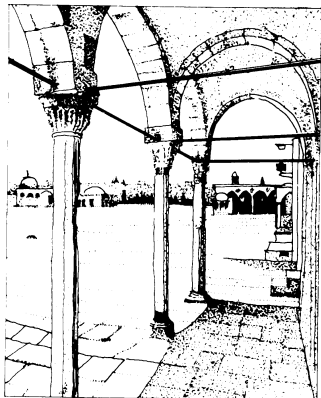
- **First, Matthew wanted to convince unbelieving Jews that Jesus is the Messiah.**

Matthew's Gospel is thoroughly Jewish in complexion. The object of the writer seems to have been to connect the Law with the Gospel; to show the relation of the Old Dispensation to the New; "to connect the memories of his readers with their hopes; to show that the Lord of the

Christian was the Messiah of the Jew.”

Though not the first of the four gospels to be written, **Matthew** is placed first as being most intimately connected with the Old Testament.

The object, as Professor Work has said, is to present the Person of Jesus Christ to the world against the sky of the Past, to make His face stand out so clearly against the background of Promise, Prophecy, Type, and Symbol, that men may recognise in Him the fulfillment of the Voice of the Past in the actuality of the Present. It was Matthew’s design - rather the Spirit’s design through him - to show that in the Old Testament the New was prefigured; that the New emerged from the Old, and vastly transcended it; that in Jesus the Old had its conclusion, and the New, its commencement. This is true of Matthew’s record in a way unmatched by any of the other gospels.



• **Second, Matthew wrote to encourage Jewish believers by explaining God’s plan for His kingdom.** If the Jews had indeed crucified their Messiah and King, what would become of them? Matthew explains that although God would judge that generation of Israelites, the promised kingdom would be established at a later time. In the interim, believers are responsible to proclaim a message of faith in the Messiah while making disciples among all nations as the kingdom takes a different form.

(e) FEATURES

This gospel, which is about as long as Luke’s, contains fourteen entire sections which are found in it alone. Among the peculiarities are 10 parables; 2 miracles; 4 events of Christ’s Infancy; 7 incidents connected with the Death and Resurrection; and not a few great passages from our Lord’s discourses. **One quarter of the whole Gospel is taken up with the actual words of the Son of Man.**

- He alone speaks of “the consummation of the age,” and he alone speaks of the “Church.”
- Characteristic phrases and expressions are:

• Luke gives **special prominence to prayer**, recording six occasions, (omitted by the others), on which our Lord prayed, and three of the parables peculiar to this Gospel concern prayer.

• This Gospel also takes special notice of the grace and tenderness of Jesus to women, as may be seen in his references to Elizabeth, Mary, Martha, Jesus’ mother, the widow, the women who accompanied Jesus, the weeping women on the way to Calvary, and Jesus’ address to the “Daughters of Jerusalem.”

• Also, in this Gospel, special notice is taken of poor and humble people, of the despised, and of the lost.

• Much is also said about angelic appearances.

Summary:

Luke is a Greek who writes to a Greek audience to convince them that Jesus was the perfect Son of Man.

JOHN

Keyword: DEITY.

“BEHOLD THY GOD!”

Written for the Church

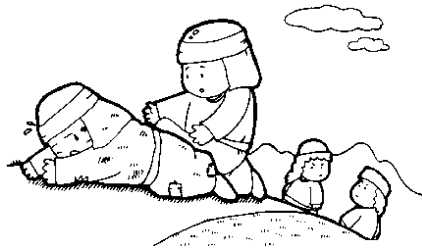
Eagle-like aspect

THE GOSPEL OF WISDOM.

(α) OVERVIEW

John writes to convince a universal audience that Jesus is the Son of God so that they might have eternal life through a living faith in Him (20:30&31). To this end John tells us that he is building his Gospel around seven miraculous signs that Jesus did.

breeds who lay outside the mercy covenanted to Israel.



Luke alone records:

- * the parable of the Good Samaritan (**Luke 10:30-37**),
- * and the incident of the 10 lepers who were cleansed, where the additional note appears about the one grateful leper, "and he was a Samaritan" (**Luke 17:16**).

OTHER EXAMPLES

If you require another couple of examples of Luke noting how the Gentiles were reached by the mercy and grace of God, then look at **chapter 4:25-27**, an excerpt from a sermon of our Saviour's exclusively recorded by Luke: "But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; 26 But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. 27 And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian."

The point is clear: while He showed great grace and favour to the Jews, He emphasised that His gospel went beyond the Jews and reached to the Gentiles (cf. His commission to His disciples, **Luke 24:45-47**).

- The **universality of the Good News** is emphasised by such words as "grace" (8 times), "to tell glad tidings" (10 times); "Saviour," or "salvation," or "saved" (14 times). The "beloved physician" presents the Great Physician to all sin-sick souls. Christ is "a Light to lighten the Gentiles;" "all flesh shall see the salvation of God;" repentance and remission of sins should be preached "unto all nations."

- "That it might be fulfilled" (9 times);
- "The Kingdom of heaven" (31 times);
- "Heavenly Father" (5 times);
- "Lo, behold" (65 times).

- There are some seventy words used by Matthew that are found nowhere else in the New Testament.
- Seven, ten, and twelve, with their multiples, repeatedly appear.
- There are **five great continuous discourses**:
 - (1) the Sermon on the Mount,
 - (2) the Address to the Apostles,
 - (3) the Parables on the Kingdom of Heaven,
 - (4) the talk on the Church, and
 - (5) the Olivet Discourse.

Summary:

The Gospel of Matthew was written by a Jew to an audience of Jews to convince them that Jesus was the Messiah, the King of the Jews.

MARK

Keyword: MINISTRY.

"BEHOLD MY SERVANT"

Written in Rome, for Romans.

Ox-like aspect

THE GOSPEL OF WORK.

(α) OVERVIEW

Mark's Gospel presents Jesus as the Servant who came to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many (**10:45**). Although Jesus starts by serving the multitudes, the second half of Mark focuses on His teaching and ministering to His disciples.

Mark devotes 36% of his book to the events of Christ's final week - the eight days from His entry into Jerusalem (**11:1-11**) to His resurrection (**16:1-8**). This shortest of the Gospels is direct and to the point, emphasizing action rather than detailed teaching. The word "immediately" is found again and again throughout the book.

(b) AUTHORSHIP

The early church fathers unanimously agreed that:

- (1) the second Gospel was written by Mark, and
- (2) the main source of information for this Gospel is the preaching of Peter.

CONNECTION WITH PETER

Papias, in 120 A.D., described Mark as "the interpreter of Peter." In **Acts 10:34-43** a summary of Peter's preaching appears, and it seems likely that Mark's Gospel is substantially the full text of Peter's spoken messages. (By "interpreter" in all likelihood Papias meant "translator," that is, that Mark translated into Greek the Aramaic in which Peter would preach).

We assume that the Mark referred to is the same person as the John [Hebrew name], also called Mark [Latin name] (**Acts 12:12,25; 15:37**) mentioned ten times in the New Testament (cf. **Acts 13:5,13; 15:39; Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 24; 1 Peter 5:13**).

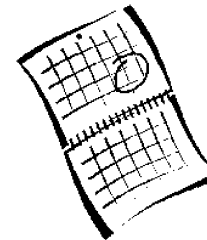
John Mark was a Jewish Christian, the son of Mary, whose house was an early Christian meeting place (**Acts 12:12**). He may have become a Christian under the influence of Peter (note **1 Peter 5:13**, where Peter referred to him as "my son"). After a falling out with the apostle Paul during a missionary trip, the rift was apparently healed, because Paul sent for Mark later on, writing "he is profitable to me for the ministry" (**2 Timothy 4:11**).

(c) DATE

The account in Mark centering around Jesus' prediction of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem suggests a date before A.D. 70, which is when the temple was destroyed by the Roman army. The book was probably written between A.D. 55 and 63.

(d) OCCASION & PURPOSE

The overwhelming testimony of the early church is that the second Gospel was written in Rome primarily for Gentile Roman Christians,



In Luke, however, it goes through David and Abraham back to Adam.

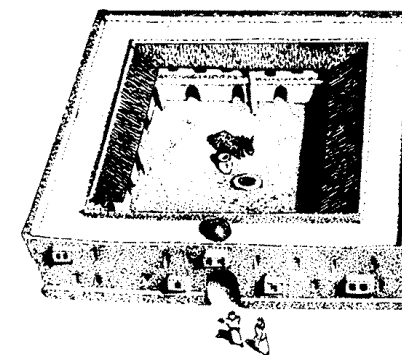
This is because Luke is not a message addressed to the Jews only but to the Gentiles as well.

The Central Message Confirmed by Christ's Statement of His Mission

The Lord Jesus established the same point when He made His first public statement of His mission (**Luke 4:18&19**). His hearers in Nazareth were glad to receive such a word, as long as it was limited to their Jewish nation. However, the Lord Jesus immediately showed them that God's sovereign, electing purpose extended His grace to the Gentiles. He reminded them of events in the ministries of Elijah and Elisha when He reached out to Gentiles. Though the people of Nazareth were so offended at this reminder of biblical truth that they tried to murder Him, our Lord was determined to make this fundamental point that He had come to save both Jews and Gentiles.

Christ's Emphasis on the Scope of His Mission

As Luke's account proceeds it shows that while Christ did great works among the Jews, He continued to lay specific and special emphasis upon His inclusion of the Gentiles.



SAMARITANS

- It is also worth emphasising the space that Luke's Gospel gives to the Samaritans - people whom the Jews despised as a collection of half-

Christ, the “horn of salvation ... in the house of his servant David,” according to the covenant God made with Abraham.

• In **2:10-14** angels sound God’s praise at the birth of Christ, *the Gloria in Excelsis Deo*: “Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

• In **2:29-32** we have Simeon’s *Nunc Dimittis*: “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.”

Note the progress in these songs.

- Mary sings about the promise to Abraham and Israel.
- Zacharias sings about the redemption of Israel.
- The angels sing about a Saviour for all men. They sing about peace, not only in Israel but on earth, and about good will, not only toward Jews but toward all men.
- Simeon’s theme is that in Christ salvation is prepared for all men. He is a light to lighten the Gentiles and He is the glory of Israel.

These four songs encapsulate the message of Luke. It is a message of covenant faithfulness, redemption, grace, and peace. It is a message of good will from God to men, both Jews and Gentiles. Simeon’s words go to the heart of the message of Luke: **Christ is the light of the Gentiles and the glory of Israel.** That is the great theme of Luke.

CONFIRMATION OF CENTRAL MESSAGE

The Central Message Confirmed by the Genealogy of Christ

Like Matthew, Luke has a genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ. Matthew’s genealogy is through the line of Joseph, who was the legal, though not He biological, father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Luke’s genealogy is that of Mary, the virgin mother of Jesus.

- In Matthew, where the emphasis is on Christ the King of Israel, the genealogy goes back through David to Abraham and stops there.

and many features of the book support that conclusion. For example:



- Mark does *not* quote extensively from the Old Testament; he would not be expected to with people who would be largely unacquainted with it. There is also no mention of the Jewish law.
- He explains Jewish customs, which he would not have to do if he were writing to Jews (**7:2ff, 7:34; 15:42**).
- Words which a Roman would not have known are translated (e.g., **3:7; 5:41; 10:46**, etc.).
- The Mount of Olives is located (**13:3**).
- He uses the Roman method of measuring time (**6:8**), etc.
- Latin words occur which are not in the other Records (e.g. **6:27; 7:4; 12:42**, etc.).

The opening words of **Mark** may be taken to indicate the purpose (**1:1**) ... namely, to present Jesus as He had been in daily actual life, living and working among men, in the fulness of His energy, the Servant who stooped to conquer (**Zechariah 3:8; Isaiah 52; 53:12**). **Chapter 10:45** summarizes the Gospel: “The Son of Man came ... to minister,” **chaps.1-10**; “and to give His life a ransom for many.” His purpose was primarily pastoral.

One of the more striking aspects of Mark’s presentation of the disciples is how often they misunderstand God’s ways and Jesus’ identity, and even deny Him (e.g., **4:13, 40; 6:52; 7:17-19; 8:17-21; 14:21, 27**). **Mark apparently wanted his readers to understand that discipleship and failure are not mutually exclusive; biblical realism would help keep the Roman Christians from giving up in disillusionment when they faced hardship and stumbled.**

(e) FEATURES

There are eighteen miracles in the **Gospel of Mark**, two of which are exclusively Mark's; and four parables, one of which is peculiar to this Gospel. None of these parables is developed, and there are no long discourses.

THE SERVANT AT WORK

- Mark alone says (twice), that the Apostles "had no leisure so much as to eat." 41 times he uses a word (eutheos) which is variously translated "immediately," "anon," "forthwith," "by and by," "straightway," "as soon as," and "straitly."
- He alone tells us of no less than 11 occasions when Christ retired from His work, either to escape from His enemies, or to refresh His soul with prayer.
- He alone tells us that Jesus was "the carpenter," so flashing a light over those obscure years in Nazareth.

Summary:

Mark is a Gentile, writing to Roman Christians, presenting Jesus as a perfect Servant.

LUKE

Keyword: HUMANITY.

"BEHOLD THE MAN!"

Written for the world.

Man-like aspect

THE GOSPEL OF SYMPATHY.

(α) OVERVIEW

Luke's Gospel presents Jesus as the perfect "Son of Man" who "came to seek and to save that which was lost" (19:10). Luke emphasizes the perfect humanity and redemptive mission of Jesus. Christ's human

It is worth noting that Matthew, in tracing Jesus' ancestry, starts from Abraham, the founder of Israel; **Matthew 1:1**: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." But Luke's genealogy of Jesus lifts the whole matter out of that narrower and purely nationalist setting, and runs back to Adam, the founder of the race, and beyond Adam to God Himself, the Father of all mankind: "... which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God," is how Luke's genealogy ends (**Luke 3:38**).

In pursuance of the purpose to present Jesus the Saviour of the world, it is worth Luke alone records the parables of the Two Debtors, the Lost Piece of Silver, the Prodigal Son, the Good Samaritan, the Rich Man and Lazarus, the Pharisee and the Publican, and five others; only Luke records the miracles of the Ten Lepers, and the Miraculous Draught of Fishes, and four others.

In short, **the key-note of this Gospel is its universalism.**

You scan across its pages, pick up the focus on the breadth of Jesus' appeal and redemption ... and end up thinking of the lines of John Kent:

**Every kindred, tongue and nation —
Worthy the Lamb!
Join to sing the great salvation;
Worthy the Lamb!
Loud as mighty thunders roaring,
Floods of mighty waters pouring,
Prostrate at His feet adoring,
Worthy the Lamb!**

Four Hymns of the Incarnation

Luke alone preserves the four hymns that surround the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- In **Luke 1:46-55** we have Mary's *Magnificat*, "My soul doth magnify the Lord." The theme of the *Magnificat* is God's promise to Abraham and to Israel fulfilled in Mary's virgin-born Son (**vs.54&55**).
- In **1:68-79** we have Zacharias's *Benedictus*, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel." Its theme is the redemption of Israel by

Why these dates and details? Luke assures us that he was very careful with his information (**Luke 1:1-4**).

CAREFUL, EXACT HISTORIAN

Skeptics did not think that! Some of Luke’s details were once used by Bible skeptics to prove, not only that Luke did not know what he was talking about, but that the Bible contained wrong information and therefore could not be trusted. Then discoveries were made by archaeologists that have again and again demonstrated that Luke was an accurate, exact and careful historian.

For instance, when:

* in **Luke 2:1-3**, he records the detail that Quirinius was governor of Syria at the time of Jesus’ birth around 6 BC, many Bible critics pounced on this as an error because the only information they had placed Quirinius as governor of Syria in 6 AD. However, an ancient inscription found in Antioch confirms that Quirinius was indeed governor of Syria in 7 BC as well.

* And again in our text (**Luke 3:1**), Luke tells us that Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene in the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar. This fact was disputed until an inscription was found near Damascus, dated between 14 and 29 AD, which reads, “*Freedman of Lysanias the tetrarch.*” Luke was right.

Sir William Ramsay was one of these skeptics. He began his career in archaeology convinced the Bible did not stand up to close scrutiny. He believed that **Luke** (and Luke’s other Bible book - **Acts**) were written late in the C2nd and were historically inaccurate. However, after working a lifetime in the field where he was in a position to study the evidence, William Ramsay concluded: “Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy, he is possessed of the true historic sense ... in short, this author should be placed along with the greatest of historians.”

[For a more detailed appreciation of this aspect of Luke’s Gospel, listen to the sermon, ‘The Relevance And Dominance Of Bible Christianity,’ at: <http://sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?currSection=sermonsspeaker&sermonID=2305101449>].

- Luke, writing for mankind, **traces Jesus’ genealogy back to Adam.**

qualities would be of particular interest to the Gospel’s intended audience, first a government official known as Theophilus (**1:3**) and then others of an idealistic, Greek mindset.

Even if nothing had been known about the various Gospel writers—their names or nationality or family tree—we could have guessed, from internal evidence alone, that the third evangelist, unlike the others, was of Gentile and not Jewish extraction.

We know that Matthew, Mark, and John were Jews born and bred, with Semitic blood in their veins, and a Hebrew outlook upon life. Luke alone was a Greek, a citizen of the wider world. And this fact has coloured every page he wrote. The mark of this Gospel is its internationalism, its passionate emphasis on how the significance of Jesus stretches out beyond the borders of Palestine to the whole world.

Luke emphasises the universal reach of the gospel more than the other Gospel writers, writing often about the faith of women and children, outcasts from Jewish society, Gentiles, and Samaritans.



(b) AUTHORSHIP

No one in the early church questioned that the third Gospel was written by Luke, the “beloved physician” (**Colossians 4:14**) and fellow missionary with Paul. The prologues to both Luke’s Gospel (**1:14**) and Acts (**1:1-5**) indicate that both books are written to a man named Theophilus as a two-part story.

Luke was apparently a Gentile because in **Colossians 4:10-14** Paul notes that three other people were his only Jewish co-workers, but lists Luke with two Gentiles.

Luke is mentioned only three times in the New Testament, all occurrences being in the Prison Epistles (**Colossians 4:14; Philemon 24; 2 Timothy 4:11**). By profession he was a medical doctor, and from the 17 nautical terms which he uses in his record it has been inferred that he exercised his art in the crowded merchant ships which were incessantly coasting from point to point of the Mediterranean. His professional knowledge is reflected in many medical terms in both

the GOSPEL and the ACTS.

The Greek language found in Luke and Acts is generally considered to be the finest among the New Testament writings. Luke's is the most literary of the Gospels; the writer was master of a good Greek style, his writing is more classical than any of the others. Luke's skilful use of Greek and his attitudes also suggest that he was himself Greek. Tradition claims he was from Antioch in Syria.

WHO IS HE CHIEFLY ADDRESSING?

Mark wrote for Romans, Matthew for Jews, and Luke for Greeks (**1:1-4; Acts 1:1**), and these represent the three great history-shaping peoples of that time:

the Romans on the side of the Law,
 the Jews on the side of Religion,
 and the Greeks on the side of Literature and Art.

(c) DATE

Luke clearly wrote the third Gospel before Acts, where it is referred to as his "former treatise" (**Acts 1:1**). Acts was most likely written before the time of Nero's persecution (A.D. 64), because Acts closes with Paul still alive and still in prison. Therefore, a time in the late fifties or early sixties seems to fit.

(d) OCCASION & PURPOSE

Luke's Gospel is dedicated to "most excellent Theophilus" (**1:3**), a name meaning "dear to God" or "friend of God." The title "most excellent" or "most noble" indicates high social standing (cf. **Acts 23:26; 24:3; and 26:25**, where it is used to describe government officials). Theophilus may have been Luke's literary patron who would see that the book reached a wider audience.

In any event, it is probable that Theophilus was a Gentile because of the book's special subject matter and the emphasis throughout the book that the proper response for all people is to follow Jesus.

The fact that Luke, in his opening verses, dedicates his work to Theophilus — "most excellent Theophilus" he calls him (**Luke 1:3**), or



as we would put it, "your Excellency," which indicates that Theophilus was some high official of the Imperial Roman Government and probably not a Christian—that fact prepares us at the outset for a storyline in which the missionary interest will be supreme, and the world-significance of the Gospel will be seen.

Matthew, working with his Jewish background, sees Jesus primarily as the Messiah of the Jews, and the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. This was only natural. But Luke, with his wider, more cosmopolitan horizons, sees Jesus as the Saviour of men of every race and place.

Luke had two purposes in writing his Gospel:

- The first was to authenticate the faith of Theophilus by demonstrating that what he had been taught was firmly grounded in history (**1:3&4**).
- However, Luke's second (primary!) purpose was to present Jesus as the Son of Man who has brought the salvation of God's kingdom to all who follow Him, Gentiles as well as Jews. The theme of this Gospel is that Jesus is the perfect "Son of Man" who "came to seek and to save that which was lost" (**19:10**).

(e) FEATURES

- Luke, a doctor, is characterised by a fondness for historical facts.

One example of this occurs in his prologue to the book - **Luke 3:1&2** - when he is placing the work and ministry of Christ, the great drama of redemption, in an historical framework. Note the amount of historical facts he packs into these two verses: **"Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, 2 Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness."**

