

WHY ONLY FOUR GOSPELS?

100 AD All 27 books of our New Testament were written but they were not all accepted as uniquely God-given.

150 AD All Christian communities/leaders accepted 20 of the 27 books as from God thru human authors. These included the 4 Gospels we have in our Bibles plus the 13 letters of Paul; called *Scripture*; *sacred writings*.

At this time, false prophets began teaching lies about Jesus: not deity, not human, did not die, was not resurrected. Over the next 200 years, some 100 books were written to support these lies. They became known as the *Lost Books of the Bible*. Seven claimed to be gospels written by people of the 1st century: the *gospels of Andrew, Bartholomew, Barnabas, Matthias, Thomas, Peter or Philip*.

Councils Church leaders / laity from east and west met to finalize which books should be part of New Testament Scripture. To guide their decisions, they developed 3 requirements. Every book included in the New Testament...

...had to be connected to eyewitnesses who had seen Jesus after His resurrection.

...had to be considered authoritative by Christian communities in the known world at the end of 1st cent.

...could not contradict the teaching about Jesus in the 4 accepted Gospels and the writings of Paul.

Using these guidelines, over the years, leaders and laity looked at every book that claimed to be from God.

367 AD - The 27 books we have in the New Testament were the only books that were accepted. All the rest were rejected, including the 7 counterfeit gospels, because their teaching about Jesus was heresy.

From **367 - 1900's**, everyone agreed only these 27 books met the requirements.

From **1940's - present**, false prophets again started teaching lies about Jesus' birth, miracles, character, death and resurrection. To support their teaching they went back to these counterfeit gospels.

Summary: we have only 4 gospels because only 4 of the 11 met the requirements of being Scripture - God-given.

WHY FOUR AND NOT JUST ONE? Because each author presents Jesus to a different group of people.

MATTHEW is writing to the Jews, presenting **Jesus as Messiah-King**.

- **Genealogy:** The line of Joseph, the legal father of Jesus goes back to David and Abraham. This gives Jesus the legal right to be the Jewish Messiah-King.
- **Early years of Jesus:** The visit by the Magi who bring royal gifts and ask for the **King of the Jews**.
- **Quotations from Old Testament:** 129 quotes or references; 12 times he says, *that it might be fulfilled*.
- **Teaching:** The Sermon on the Mount and the Olivet Discourse relate to His Kingship.
- **Ending:** *All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth* 28:18

MARK is writing to the Romans, presenting **Jesus as the ideal Servant**.

- **Genealogy:** not mentioned; not important for a servant.
- **Early years of Jesus:** Not mentioned; not important for a servant.
- **Major content:** 18 miracles; a servant is important for what he does; not what he says (only 4 parables).
- **Greek language**
 εὐθὺς (*euthus*) means *immediately*; used 42 times; examples: 1:10, 12, 18, 20, 21, 23, 28, 29, 30, 42, 43
 12 out of 16 chapters are tied together with "and"; *the narrative almost runs*.
 The biography of John is like a still picture; the biographies of Matthew and Luke are like colored slides; the biography of Mark is like a video with constant movement and action.
 paraphrased from Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia; R. Earle in *Mark*, p. 80
 He uses historic present tense in his verbs; everything is in present tense to make it more vivid.
- **Ending:** Jesus is still working. 16:20

LUKE is writing to the Greeks, presenting **Jesus as the Ideal Man**.

- **Genealogy:** He takes the family line of Mary, His biological mother back to Adam, the son of God.
- **Early years of Jesus:** He mentions the shepherds, Anna & Simeon to show Jesus is available to common people. He tells about His birth, naming, circumcision, dedication, trip to Egypt and visit to Jerusalem at 12 years old. He says Jesus, in His humanity, developed mentally, physically, spiritually and socially. 2:52
- **Teaching:** 19 parables; Jesus is interested in the individual.
- **Ending:** After His resurrection, Jesus retains His humanity; He has flesh and bones & eats with them. 24:37-43



WHY FOUR AND NOT JUST ONE? continued

JOHN is writing to everyone, presenting **Jesus as Deity**

- **Genealogy**: not mentioned; Jesus as deity had no beginning; is eternal.
- **Birth of Jesus**: not mentioned; His life did not start with human birth. He existed from the beginning.
- **Proofs of deity**: 7 witnesses declare it; 7 miracles prove it; Jesus claims to be the I AM of the Old Testament.
I AM the Door, Vine, etc.; Before Abraham was, I AM Jn 8:58; In Gethsemane, He said *I AM*. Jn. 18:8
John is declaring the world's Savior is also the world's Maker; the historical Jesus is not just man, but also the eternal Son. Jesus can teach truth because He is truth; He can give life, because He is life. (J. S. Baxter)
- **Ending**: when anyone, in faith, accepts the payment of Jesus, he /she has eternal life from Him. 20:31

THE AUTHORS

MATTHEW Levi is Jewish, a tax collector, 1 of 12 apostles.

- **Date**: written c. 60 AD from either Jerusalem or Antioch of Syria.
- **Style**: groups the teaching, miracles, reactions and future events by topics.
- **Theme**: Jesus as Messiah-KING.

MARK is John Mark he is Jewish, a cousin to Barnabas; became a believer thru Peter (1 Pet 5:13;) was his secretary.

- **Date**: written c. 60-70 AD from Rome.
- **Style**: concise, vivid, picturesque, active; explains Jewish customs.
- **Theme**: Jesus as the ideal SERVANT.

LUKE is Greek, a doctor, pastor, historian, companion to Paul.

- **Date**: written c. 60 AD from Caesarea to Theophilus, a Greek convert.
- **Style**: historical narrative beginning with a dedication in classical Greek; the rest of the book is in common or koiné Greek; it is chronological; it includes a lot of poetry.
- **Theme**: Jesus as the ideal MAN.

JOHN is Jewish, a fisherman, 1 of 12 apostles.

- **Date**: written c. 90 AD, while serving as pastor in Ephesus.
- **Style**: personal; it is the most simple of the 4 gospels; but the content is the hardest to understand.
- **Theme**: Jesus as DEITY came in human form; He is the eternal Son of God.

Matthew	the Promised One is here; see His credentials
Mark	this is how He worked; see His power
Luke	this is what He was like; see His nature
John	this is who He really was; see His Deity

(J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book*, vol. 5, p. 312)

APPLICATION: Learning from the gospel writers

- ◆ **Stop and listen** to what people are saying or asking and start where they are.
Use the facts you know about Jesus that are relevant for the person at the moment.
Present Jesus from a viewpoint they can relate to.
Once they are interested, then help them see the complete picture of Jesus; He is deity, Savior and Lord.
- ◆ **Let God use you in your own natural style.**
Some people are quiet and hesitant; others are bold and direct.
To those who need to hear a bold, direct approach, God will send a **bold** person.
For the ones who need a quiet, soft approach, He will send a **quiet** person.

Never try to be like anyone else; be yourself because God needs all kinds of people.
God will always match you with the right person for the right situation.

