

A Labor of Love

The Gospels

It's Labor Day weekend – a time when we rest from our labor!

It's a great weekend to start the New Testament, b/c **it is God's labor of love in sending His Son Jesus into this world that gives us hope of an eternal rest!**

It is the life, death, & resurrection, of Jesus, as revealed in the gospels, that fulfills for us what our earthly labor could never earn for us!

The 4 gospels – **Matthew, Mark, Luke, & John give us eye-witness testimony to the events that changed the course of history & made salvation possible!**

Today we will look at all 4 gospels - not in detail, but in overview, so that we can be better equipped as we read them to discover more of the glory of Jesus Christ as revealed through these 4 unique, but united, perspectives.

Don't worry if you feel like one Sunday is not enough to cover these 4 books of the Bible. We will be spending 2023 diving deeper into the life, miracles, & teachings of Jesus as revealed through the gospels, so stay tuned!

For our purposes today, let's take a bird's eye view of the 4 gospels to gain a better perspective on where we can land if we want to discover more about the person, life, and work of Jesus Christ – **the focal point of all history!**

All 4 gospels serve the purpose of calling us to follow Jesus in our lives! However, all 4 gospels reveal different reasons for doing so!

- **The gospel of Mark focuses on following Jesus, the suffering servant!** It was written to Gentile Christians, probably in Rome, facing persecution!

Mark's gospel encourages those being persecuted, relating their suffering to the sufferings, death, resurrection and return of Jesus! **(Mark 10:45)**

A theology of the cross is of great emphasis for Mark, thus giving a different perspective on our suffering, especially suffering for the sake of the gospel.

Mark's gospel is the shortest, yet it in no way is it found to be lacking!

Mark's rapid-fire verses, connected by words like "and", "now" & "immediately", really hit the highlights & the impact of Jesus' life & ministry.

Mark wrote his gospel with the help of the Apostle Peter, which makes total sense as to why this is such a fast-moving, hard-hitting account of Jesus' life!

Matthew's account is much longer & filled w/ more teaching & explanation!

Matthew ties the story of Jesus's life & teachings to Israel's story by showing how Jesus fulfilled all the O.T. prophecies of the one true Messiah, but how He also came to be the Savior of the whole world, not just Israel's savior!

- **The gospel of Matthew focuses on following Jesus, who is Lord of a diverse Church!** Jewish Christians really struggled with this, so Matthew wrote his gospel mostly with this/them in mind! **(Matt. 16:13-17, 28:18-20)**

Matthew's hope was to bring both Jew & Gentile under one Church, with an emphasis on being on mission together for the gospel (The Great Commission)!

- **The gospel of Luke focuses on following Jesus, Savior to all, but especially the marginalized!** Jesus is the One who brings good news to the lowly, the hungry, the sick, & the burdened! **(Luke 5:31-32)**

Luke was a physician, so his concern for such people makes total sense. He also strongly emphasizes the bodily death & resurrection of Jesus in his gospel, and as a physician, he brings credibility to it. **(Luke 24:36-43)**

Luke pays special attention to detail, & orders his account more carefully, both historically & theologically, than any other gospel account!

- **The gospel of John focuses on following Jesus, the eternal Son of God!** It starts with Jesus' divinity rather than His humanity! Following Jesus is following God, b/c for John, Jesus is God in human form. **(John 1:1-5, 14)**

Because John tells Jesus' story from this different starting point, it is no surprise that 90% of John's gospel does not appear in the other 3 gospels.

Reading John's gospel is a great place to start for unbelievers because John so strongly emphasizes the need, & the evidence, for belief in Jesus!

The word "believe" appears 99 times in John's gospel. Maybe John's hope is that **the one who reads his account of the life of Jesus might become #100!** **John 3:16 – "... that whosoever believes in him..."**

Matthew, Mark, Luke, & John labored - to preserve a historical account of Jesus' life, - to further inform the faith of those who believe, - to make more believers through the testimony of this gospel message! **As we celebrate this weekend, may their labor/gospel accounts provide us with great rest!**

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