

I. We have four gospels.

- Only Mark uses the word “gospel” in his introduction. Other teachers and copyists took this and added it to other.
 - We have four gospels. This was accepted in the early church. In the second century, Christian writers referenced the four. They did not debate this issue.
 - When others attempted to foist other recent documents as gospels, the early church nearly always rejected them as not being apostolic.
 - None of our four gospels have a name attached to them. The authors did not identify themselves, yet from the beginning of the second century, the authors as we know them were known then. Though they were written “anonymously” the Church attached the same names we know since the end of the first century.
 - The writers of false gospels nearly always claimed they were writing with the name of a disciple trying to gain acceptance for their gospel.
 - The four gospels were uncontested except by heretics wishing to push a different version of Christianity.
- Two early Church Fathers commented on the writers of the gospels.
 - Papias (AD 60-130), a disciple of Polycarp, who as a disciple of the disciple John wrote on the gospels. We have only fragments of his writings recorded from the fourth century Church historian Eusebius Pamphylus (c. 324). Papias said, John the Presbyter also said this, “Mark being the interpreter of Peter, whatsoever he recorded he wrote with great accuracy but not however, in the order in which it was spoken or done by our Lord, for he neither heard nor followed our Lord, but as before said, he was in company with Peter, who gave him such instruction as was necessary but not to give a history of our Lord’s discourses.” This is the gospel of Mark. On Matthew he wrote, “Matthew composed his history in the Hebrew dialect, and everyone translated it as he was able.”
 - Ireneaus (AD 130-202) wrote, “Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and laying the foundations of the church. After their departure (death), Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter. Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him. Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who had leaned upon his breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia.”
- II. Why do we have four gospels? Why did God choose a fourfold presentation of Christ’s ministry? Why did God not give us one comprehensive gospel?
- A. Ireneaus of Lyons (AD 130-202) compared the four gospels to the four points of the earth, the four winds of the earth, and the four faces of the cherubs associated with God’s throne.

1. The lion represents His leadership and royal power. It appears Ireneaus relates this to the John as Christ is the Word and His person is full of all confidence.
 2. The calf pictures Christ as sacrifice. He applies this to Luke who pictures Christ in His priestly character and as the sacrificial calf.
 3. The man pictures Christ in "His advent as a human being." He applies this to Matthew as the gospel introduces Jesus as son of David and son of Abraham. He claims Matthew is the gospel of His humanity.
 4. The flying eagle refers to "the gift of the Spirit hovering with His wings over the Church." He applies this to Mark because it begins with "the prophetic spirit coming down from on high to men."
- B. Louis Talbot (*Why Four Gospels?:* 1944) followed this model of the four faces of the cherub to present the four gospels.
1. Matthew presents Christ as the Lion for the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the King. No reference is made to His being the Lion in Matthew.
 2. Mark presents Christ as the ox or calf, the servant who does God's work unwavering and then serves as the sacrifice.
 3. Luke presents Christ as the man, who serves as priest.
 4. John represents Christ as the eagle the Word as God.
- III. Each gospel does not state its purpose with absolute clarity. However, the opening verses or chapters appear to present some idea or ideas regarding the purpose.
- A. All four gospels were written after the Church began.
1. Matthew likely wrote first, perhaps prior to AD 50.
 2. Mark wrote after Peter's death, so after AD 67. He was Peter's assistant (1 Pet. 5:13).
 3. Luke wrote after departing from Judea for Rome with Paul (Acts 27:1 "we").
 4. John wrote after AD 90.
 5. Because they wrote after the Church began, all four gospels are intended for the Church.
 - a) They do not have to convey teaching for the Church's practice,
 - b) They do convey some teaching for the Church's practice.
 - c) They provide the Church testimony regarding God's promises and the nation of Israel.
 - d) They provide the Church revelation about why Israel rejected and crucified Jesus Christ.
 - e) They provide the Church revelation regarding Jesus Christ's earthly life.

- B. Matthew begins with Jesus Christ's genealogy going back to David and Abraham.
1. God promised Abraham that kings would come from Sarah (Gen. 17:16). He reiterates this promise to Jacob (Gen. 35:11).
 2. God promised David a son who would sit on His throne (2 Sam. 7:12-17).
 3. The genealogy ends with "by whom was born Jesus who is called the Christ." (Matt. 1:16).
 4. Matthew tells us that magi came from the east wishing to worship the one "born King of the Jews" (Matt. 2:1-2).
 5. Matthew tells us that Jesus was preaching "Change your minds, for the kingdom from the heavens is at hand." (Matt. 4:17).
 - a) Everywhere He went, He was proclaiming the good news about the kingdom (Matt. 4:23).
 - b) Matthew then includes one instance of Jesus' repeated message about the kingdom in Matthew 5-7, in which we get to see what His preaching about the kingdom looked like.
 6. Matthew records more references to Jesus as the Son of Man (30x) than the other gospel writers: Mark (15x), Luke (24x), (John 12x).
 - a) Jesus tells of the coming (presence) of the Son of Man (Mt. 24:27, 37, 39).
 - b) The Son of man idea rests on Daniel 7:13.
 - (1) He is the One like a Son of Man who came before the Ancient of Days (Father).
 - (2) He will be served by all peoples, nations, and language (7:14).
 - (3) He will have a dominion that is everlasting (7:14).
 - (4) He will have a kingdom that is one not divided like earthly kingdoms (7:14).
 - (5) He will have a kingdom that will not be destroyed (7:14).
 7. God gave us Matthew so we would know He has and will honor His promises to Israel. Much of Christianity teaches those promises have been forfeited by Israel.
 - a) He promised a kingdom to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (8:11).
 - b) He promised a King, an anointed one (Christ) (22:42ff).
 - c) He promises that the King will sit on His throne (25).
 - d) Israel rejected Jesus as their Christ (27:22).
 - e) Matthew is not evangelistic.
 - f) Matthew explains what happened to God's promises and plan for Israel and why they crucified Jesus Christ.

- C. Mark 1:1 gives us, “The beginning of the¹ gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God.”
1. Mark identifies Jesus as the Anointed One and the Son of God (Mk. 1:1).
 - a) The Anointed One meant He was Anointed to be Israel’s king.
 - b) Son of God meant He was deity Himself.
 - c) As to His deity, Peter states that He is Lord of all (Acts 10:36). To be Lord of all was to be deity and not a lesser deity but the absolute one and only, for only this way could He be Lord with reference to all.
 - d) Peter recognized Jesus as the Christ (Mk. 8:29; cp Mt. 16:16).
 - (1) Mark recorded Peter’s teachings about Christ.
 - (2) Mark refers to “Peter” 21x, Mt. 23x, Lk. 19x and to Simon 10x, Mt. 9x, Lk. 14x.
 - e) The religious leaders condemned Christ for this (Mk. 14:60-65).
 2. Mark uses the title Lord [*kurios*] 18 times compared with 80 in Matthew, 104 in Luke, and 52 in John. Mark emphasizes Christ as servant and so he focuses on what Jesus was doing.
 - a) When Peter presented the gospel, he began with Jesus’s baptism and being anointed with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:36-38).
 - b) Peter recounted Jesus doing good works and healing.
 - (1) Mark’s pace is fast.
 - (a) He uses the adverb “immediately” [*euthus*] 42 times compared with five times in Matthew and once in Luke. (e.g. 1:10, 12, 18, 20, 21, 23, 28, 29-30).
 - (b) He uses the conjunction “and” [*kai*] 1,100 times.
 - (c) He moves “**And** immediately this happened **and** then this **and**...”
 - (d) He records like Peter preached, brief, to the point, recording events.
 - (e) He records 23 instances of healing, sometimes of many people, in the next ten chapters.
 - (2) Mark records Jesus touching people to heal them or in kindness (1:29-31, 40-42; 3:10; 5:41; 6:5; 7:33; 8:22-25; 9:27; 10:13).
 - (3) Mark focuses on Jesus at work and does not connect His actions to Old Testament prophecies.
 - (a) Mark includes quotations when Jesus or others quote Scripture.

¹ Mark has no definite article for beginning. The anarthrous state indicates quality. In Mark’s case, if he is the recorder of Peter’s messages, Peter may not have presented the life of Christ in all these details exactly the same in every occasion. Therefore, Mark states that he is present a beginning, one that is like what he often heard Peter share as Peter prepared to announced the gospel.

- (b) Except for his introduction, Mark does not references Scriptures (1:2-3; Mal. 3:1; Isa. 40:3).
 - (c) Mark's only reference to fulfilled Scripture is 14:49, and he does not quote a specific text.
3. Mark utilizes the verb "proclaim" or "preach" [*kērussō*] more than twice as often as Matthew and Luke, as it was Jesus' charge to His disciples (Acts 10:42). Though he records that Jesus preached, he does not record many of Jesus' lengthy teachings.
 4. Mark writes about A.D. 65-67 for Christian readers, (Walter W. Wessel *Mark* in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan).
 - a) God gave us Mark as "A beginning of the gospel." Acts 10 demonstrates that Peter began His gospel presentations by rehearsing some of the earthly life of Christ Jesus. It provided readers an historical background to understand who this Jesus is before presenting the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.
 5. Mark does tell us that Christ rose from the dead (Mk. 16:6).
 - a) Some older manuscripts end after 16:8.
 - b) Some "scholars" claim that this leaves Mark, "the original gospel" hopeless.
 - c) Even if it ends with 16:8, the man told the women that Jesus is risen.
 - d) There is also good evidence that these verses were part of the original text.
 - e) One old manuscript leaves appropriate space to include these verses, but does not leave such space at the end of the other books.
 6. Mark provides Christians a fast paced account of Jesus good works and healings as an introduction to who He is as we share the gospel.

- D. Luke 1:3 indicates Luke's goal is to provide an orderly account for a friend.
1. "Orderly account" may refer to the ordered sequence, that is the careful chronology in which the events happened.²
 - a) The adverb ἄνωθεν means "from above, from a higher place." Luke wished to start at the top or from the beginning and work through all the events in order.
 - b) The aorist subjunctive verb ἐπιγνῶς form of ἐπιγινώσκω, has a perfective sense to really know, therefore to have a full or complete knowledge.
 2. Luke records the words of others speaking about Jesus.
 - a) The messenger Gabriel mentions Jesus first in Luke 1:31-37.
 - (1) He announces the birth of Jesus.
 - (2) He announces that Jesus is the Son of the Most High and so indicates Him as deity (1:32).
 - (a) Luke uses the title "God" [θεός] 122x, with Matthew at 51x, Mark at 49x, and John at 83x.
 - (3) He announces that Jesus will sit on David's throne and reign over the household of Jacob (1:33).
 - (4) He announces that Jesus' kingdom will not have an end (1:33).³
 - b) Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, prophesied about Jesus (Lk. 1:67-79).
 - (1) God was redeeming His people (1:68).
 - (2) God was providing a salvation from Israel's enemies (1:71).
 - (3) God was keeping His covenant with Israel's fathers (1:72-73).
 - (4) God was rescuing His people from their enemies (1:74).
 - c) Simeon, a man who was expecting the comfort/help for Israel (2:25-32).
 - (1) He saw God's salvation by seeing Jesus.
 - (2) He saw a light from God for revelation for Gentiles (2:32).
 - (3) He saw a light from God for glory of God's people Israel (2:32).
 3. Luke gives us a genealogy that connects Jesus to Adam, reminding us that He is man (3:23-38).
 - a) Jesus must be man to serve as a priest.
 - b) Luke focuses on the priests and the temple.

² The NET Bible footnote on this word states that it may be orderly but not necessarily chronological.

³ This means that the 1,000 years of Revelation 20 is only the first stage of that kingdom.

4. Luke includes some details about the temple.
 - a) Jesus' parents brought Him to the temple as an infant (Lk. 2:21). This was the first time God had been in the temple since the days of Ezekiel (Ezk. 10:4, 18; 11:23).
 - b) Jesus stayed (at ease) at the temple when He was twelve (2:41).
 - c) Jesus referred to David entering God's house (6:3-4).
 - d) Jesus states that Zechariah was killed between the altar and God's house (11:51).
 - e) Jesus told a parable of two men praying at the temple (18:9-17).
 - f) Jesus quoted Isaiah 56:7 that called the temple, "My house" (19:45-46).
 - g) Jesus taught daily in the temple (19:47-20:1).
 - h) Jesus told His disciples that not one stone would be left upon another in the temple (21:5-6).
 - i) Jesus' disciples remained regularly at the temple while they awaited the Spirit after Jesus departed into heaven (24:51-53).
5. Luke adds Jesus' dealings with Gentiles, some of which are not recorded in the other gospels. Luke may have been a Gentile and was a ministry partner with Paul who was the apostle to the Gentiles.
 - a) Simeon saw God's plan as including Gentiles (2:32).
 - b) Jesus' genealogy goes back to Adam, so it includes all people (3:23-28).
 - c) Jesus said the Gentiles would receive Him better than the Jews (Lk. 4:25-30).
 - (1) A Sidonian woman helped Elijah.
 - (2) A Syrian leper was healed by Elisha.
 - d) Jesus was amazed at the faith a Roman military leader (Gentile) showed (7:1-10).
 - e) Jesus refused to let James and John call down fire upon a Samaritan village for He did not come to destroy (Lk. 9:51-56).
 - f) Jesus tells the parable of the compassionate Samaritan (Lk. 10:29-37).
 - g) Jesus warned of Gentiles standing in the judgment and speaking against Israel's unbelief (Lk. 11:31-32).
 - (1) The queen of the South will speak in judgment against Israelis (11:31).
 - (2) The men of Nineveh will speak in judgment against Israelis (11:32).
 - h) Luke alone records Jesus talking about the times of the Gentiles (Lk.21:24).
 - i) Jesus healed ten lepers but only a Samaritan returned to thank Him (Lk. 17:12-19).

- j) Jesus asked the Father to forgive those who crucified Him, for they did not know what they were doing (Lk. 23:34). Yet they cast lots for His clothing (23:35).
- 6. God gave us Luke to show that while Jesus' earthly ministry was to Israel, He anticipated the work being extended to Gentiles.
 - a) Jesus charged His disciples to herald His death and resurrection connected to repentance and forgiveness of sins (24:46-47).
 - b) Jesus' last recorded words in Luke tell the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they receive the promise from the Father (the Spirit) (24:48-49).
- 7. Luke has an extensive teaching section unique to his account (Lk. 9:51-17:37).
 - a) Jesus corrected men's thinking that those who suffer or die are worse than those who live (13:1-5). Under law this was partially true; sin brings judgment.
 - b) Jesus illustrated Israel's impending judgment with a parable (13:6-9).
 - c) Jesus warned men against sitting in the place of honor (14:7-11).
 - d) Jesus corrected men's attitudes about who they should associate with (14:12-24).
 - e) Jesus rejoices over finding the lost, illustrated with the lost sheep, coin, and son (Lk. 15:1-32). He tells this because He gathers with tax collectors and sinners.
- 8. Luke draws our attention to Jesus' acts and words of grace towards people.
 - a) Matthew and Mark use no words for grace.
 - b) Luke travelled extensively with Paul, who was God's house manager of this household of His grace (cp Eph. 3:2).
 - c) The angel greeted Mary, "Rejoice, graced one" or "favored" (Lk. 1:28, 30).
 - d) God's grace was upon Jesus (Lk. 2:40).
 - e) Jesus grew in grace with God and man (Lk. 2:52).
 - f) Jesus spoke words of grace when reading in Nazareth (Lk. 4:22).
 - g) Jesus graciously gave sight to many who were blind (Lk. 7:21).
 - h) Jesus illustrated a proper response to "forgiveness/graciousness" (Lk. 7:36-50). The ESV and NASB "canceled" is "graced" [*charizomai*] in 7:42-43.
 - i) Jesus indicated that a master does not normally treat His slave with grace and ask the slave to sit down and eat before he has eaten (Lk. 17:9).
 - j) Luke picks out statements about God's grace illustrated in Jesus' life as this was pertinent for Luke's Gentile reader and us.

- E. John 1:1-18 indicates that God became flesh and lived among mankind.
1. John references His deity but in different terms.
 - a) The Word is God (1:1).
 - b) The Word is Creator (1:3).
 - c) The Word is the Light of the World (1:4). He shows God's life in His actions.
 2. John tell us that they saw God's glory in Christ (1:14).
 3. John uses "Jesus" far more often than the other gospel writers.
 - a) He uses Jesus 244 times, Matthew 152, Mark 82, and Luke 88.
 - b) He emphasizes God become flesh: Jesus living among men (1:14).
 - c) He emphasizes eternal life which is knowing God and Jesus Christ. Jesus refers to Himself as Jesus Christ because we know this life within the limits of a human nature. We are the creature not the Creator (17:3).
 4. John references Jesus as the I AM.
 - a) These are Jesus' claims to deity.
 - (1) He is speaking to Jews.
 - (2) He doesn't call Himself "God" with the Greek *theos*.
 - (3) He calls Himself "God" with the Hebrew title, "The One Being" (that's how someone else would say it) or as He would say it "I AM." We pronounce the Hebrew word Jehovah or Yehowah
 - b) He is the I AM who initiated conversation with the Samaritan woman (4:26).
 - c) He is the I AM who told His disciples to stop being afraid in the storm (6:20).
 - d) He is the I AM, the Bread of Life who satisfies one's spiritual hunger (6:35).
 - e) He is the I AM, the Bread who comes down from heaven (6:41, 48, 51).
 - f) He is the I AM, the Light of the world showing God's life to man (8:12).
 - g) He is the I AM, the One who gives witness to Himself and for Whom the Father also gives witness (8:18).
 - h) He is the I AM, the One men must believe (8:24).
 - i) He is the I AM before Abraham existed (8:58).
 - j) He is the I AM, the door for the sheep, the only way to be saved (10:7-9).
 - k) He is the I AM, the good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep (10:11).
 - l) He is the I AM, the resurrection and the life (11:25).
 - m) He is the I AM, the Way, the Truth, the Life, the only way to God (14:6).
 - n) He is the I AM, the Vine the provides life to the branches (15:1, 5).

- o) He is the I AM who could not be taken if He did not permit it (18:5-6).
- 5. John wrote Jesus' signs so we would have life in His name (character)(Jh. 20:30-31).
 - a) We ("you" John's readers) can live out eternal life as Jesus Christ did.
 - b) We might go on believing (present tense).
 - c) We have a promise in who Jesus is even now.
 - (1) We are in Him (14:20).
 - (2) He is in us (14:20).
 - (3) We can abide in Him and live out eternal life (15:4-5).
 - (4) Jesus is the Anointed one for us, as He is our place (in Christ) with God.
 - (5) Jesus is the Son of God, as God our life.
 - (6) We can abide in Him and He will abide in us (Jh. 15:4-5).
 - d) We can have eternal life in our conduct like the Father gave the Son to have eternal life in His human nature (Jh. 5:26).
 - e) We can have life like Him because His changing water to wine illustrated the coming change of believers having eternal life (2:7-9).
 - (1) The Spirit causes this new birth yet remains unseen (3:3, 5).
 - (2) Christ gives water that springs up into eternal life (4:13-14).
 - f) We can have this life by faith, without a series of proofs or signs because Jesus healed with a word to prove that our faith is to be signless (4:50).
 - g) We can have this life by grace, for Jesus demonstrated grace by healing an undeserving and ungrateful man (5:8-1).
 - h) We can have enough life, because He is the bread of life and demonstrated that He's enough for everyone by feeding over five thousand (6:11, 51).
 - i) We have this life even if we think we'll never make it and will always struggle, because He demonstrated that He can get us there by walking on the water and taking the boat immediately to shore (6:19-21). Therefore, we should not fear.
 - j) We have a life that allows us to see and others to see, because He is the Light of the world and gave sight to the blind man (9:5-6; cp 8:12).
 - k) We have this life because we also share in Christ's resurrection, as He is the resurrection and the life, demonstrated by raising Lazarus (11:25, 43-44).
 - l) John shows us who Jesus is and what He can do, to assure us that we too can live out this life that He lived in this world. We are in Christ and only in Him can we live out this life.