

A Quick Comparison of the Four "Gospels"

(the "Good News" about Jesus)

John often focuses on Jesus as *God*. Much of the content found in this Gospel is unique, and focuses on specific events or details not mentioned in the other three accounts. This book was written specifically to provide us with a sure foundation for our trust in Jesus - in who he is, as well as in what he can do in our lives (John 20:30-31).

The other three gospels do not have as great a focus on Jesus' deity - although they do not totally neglect it, either. Their emphasis is on various aspects of Jesus as a *human* - who he was and what he did. In this respect, there are many points in common between these three books. Some passages are almost word-for-word identical!

- **Luke** has a greater focus on the "human side" of Jesus. Jesus was a real person, with a genuine interest in people. He knew what it was like to live in a world full of trouble. He was willing to associate with those who were less fortunate. He came to bring hope and salvation to a world that was hopeless and dying - a hope that is available to *all* who are willing to trust in him!
- **Mark** is an action-packed account of Jesus as a servant - one who was even willing to suffer and die for the good of others. We also are to be servants: We are called to be Jesus' disciples - people who are willing to follow his example.
- **Matthew** focuses on Jesus as the King, the one who fulfills all the promises given by the Old Testament prophets, regarding a coming Deliverer for the Jews. More than that, he is also the one specially chosen by God, to bring salvation to the ends of the earth.

Something you can do

Look for some of the similarities and differences between these gospel accounts of Jesus' life and teachings. As you do so, the following principles may help you sort-out your observations:

1. Sometimes you will find a record of the same event or teaching, in two or more gospels.
 - At times, you will discover that these different accounts are essentially identical.
 - At other times, some accounts will include details that others omit. [Example: One account may record the specific number of people involved in some event, whereas another account may focus on only the main people involved.]
 - In some instances, different accounts may include completely different - but complementary - details about an event.
2. Each human author chose what details he would include, based on the needs of the people who would initially receive his letter. Because of this, one account may go into great detail, describing some specific event, whereas another may completely omit it.
 - Example: Was the book originally intended for Jews or non-Jews? [Matthew quoted a lot of Old Testament Scripture, because the Jews needed to see the connection between Jesus and the Old Testament prophecies.]

3. Each author's individuality would also influence his writing style, as well as the types of details he would tend to include.
 - o Example: Luke was a doctor and would tend to pay attention to details others might omit.
 - o Example: Matthew (also called Levi) was originally a tax collector, and might sometimes have a greater focus on numbers. In some instances, Matthew records the number of people involved in an event, whereas other accounts may just focus on the main individual - compare Matthew 20:30 and Mark 10:46.

Remember: The word "Gospel" simply means "Good News."

These four books record the "good news" about Jesus!