

# The 4 Biographies of Jesus

Written and compiled by Gary Kukis

These studies are designed for believers in Jesus Christ only. If you have exercised faith in Christ, then you are in the right place. If you have not, then you need to heed the words of our Lord, Who said, “**For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son, so that every [one] believing [or, trusting] in Him shall not perish, but shall have eternal life! For God did not send His Son into the world so that He should judge the world, but so that the world shall be saved through Him. The one believing [or, trusting] in Him is not judged, but the one not believing has already been judged, because he has not believed in the Name of the only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son of God.”** (John 3:16–18). “**I am the Way and the Truth and the Life! No one comes to the Father except through [or, by means of] Me!**” (John 14:6).

Every study of the Word of God ought to be preceded by a naming of your sins to God. This restores you to fellowship with God (1John 1:8–10). **If we acknowledge our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness** (1John 1:9). If there are people around, you would name these sins silently. If there is no one around, then it does not matter if you name them silently or whether you speak aloud.

Taken from lessons #006–008 in the Luke series.

[Luke Lessons #1–100 \(html\)](#)

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**Preface:** Four different men, for a set of personal and spiritual reasons, wrote four biographies of Jesus. We will briefly examine and compare these biographies, and the men who wrote them.

## The Biographies of Jesus:

The gospels (which term means *good news*)—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—are 4 different biographies of Jesus the Messiah. Make no mistake about it—these are biographies, where each man observes and/or investigates; and then writes, taking into account his own sensibilities, contacts and experiences. Matthew was not favored by the general Jewish population because he was a tax collector.

He would have been regarded as a national traitor by some; but he was a very devout and learned man—and apparently, quite successful at his work.

Matthew knows the Old Testament and he knows the prophecies of the coming Messiah; so he, more than any of the other biographers (and more than most pharisees), brings Old Testament Scripture into the picture. Jesus is *the Prophet like Moses, the Suffering Servant, David's Greater Son, the Messiah*—and this is confirmed in His life when compared to the Scriptures about the Messiah. Matthew does this throughout his gospel. Furthermore, Matthew's ears are honed to hear Old Testament teaching, which is most of what Jesus did. So when Jesus taught something which lined up with the Old Testament, Matthew was likely to recognize it and write down (or remember) both what Jesus taught along with the pertinent Scripture down (from memory). Therefore, Matthew often quoted pertinent Old Testament Scriptures.

Mark was a younger man, closely associated with Peter. He would have been a kid during the Lord's earthly ministry. Mark may be understood as representing the next generation of believers. He is from the generation who never actually saw Jesus. He does not present the gospel as an eyewitness, but very much from Peter's viewpoint, Peter being a man of action. Less talking and more doing. Mark may have acted as Peter's secretary, which would have made the gospel of Mark actually the gospel of Peter. However much Mark was influenced by the testimony of others in writing of his gospel is unknown.

Dr. Peter Pett describes Mark's gospel in this way: *In the Gospel the historical material is brought together with the intention of presenting Jesus Christ in the fullness of His glory. It is not a life story, written out of academic interest, nor, except in general outline, a chronological history, but the reverent recording of truth about Jesus and His teaching that was carefully remembered and passed on by those who knew Him (who were skilled at memorising) because of Who He was, put together in order to present the truth about Him. The purpose was in order to demonstrate that He was what they had come to know Him to be. But there is no extravagance in the descriptions (this lack of extravagance is a distinctive feature of the four Gospels), they are sensible, deliberate, and even understated.*<sup>1</sup>

Luke was a gentile, and he focuses primarily upon the humanity of Jesus Christ. The title for Jesus as such is the Son of Man (a title, interestingly enough, found 28 times in Matthew and 25 times in Luke; this title is found half as often in Mark and in John).

Because Luke is focused upon the Lord's humanity, he is the biographer who focuses in on Mary, and upon the early years in Jesus' life. (As an aside, Mary is *not* the mother of God; but she is the mother of the humanity of Jesus Christ).

Because Luke concerns himself with the Lord's humanity, he therefore focuses on the line of Mary, which goes back all the way to Adam—the key being that Jesus is fully and completely a man. The promise of this Savior goes back to Gen. 3, where He is called *the seed of the woman*, a very important title, which we will study in the book of Luke.

I have heard it said that, people of that era were more concerned that the humanity of Jesus might get lost in His history, because He did things that no man has ever done before (or since). Therefore, his extraordinary qualities—even His Deity—stand out. But Jesus is fully and completely a man; and this is something that Luke emphasizes throughout.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Mark (book comments).

Whereas, Matthew focuses, in part, upon Jesus' Jewishness (and, therefore, he takes the paternal line<sup>2</sup> of Jesus back to Abraham), Luke is not confined by the Jewish religion in any way, since he is a gentile to whom God's grace came. However, Luke clearly respects the Scriptures and he quotes from them from time to time as well. The New Testament believer should never forget that God established a foundation for His faith in the Old Testament. We do not discard the Old Testament for any reason.

Luke was not an eyewitness to any of the incidents in his gospel, but he was an historian and he had contact with perhaps a dozen or more eyewitnesses or people whom he trusted. So he compiled his gospel based upon what others told him (and, I believe, upon the gospels of Matthew and Mark). Luke may have even had access to other biographical material lost to us but written by other Apostles or disciples (we don't know this; I am simply expressing that this as a possibility). No doubt there were writings in that era lost to time and decay, where others chronicled their encounters with Jesus.

Luke, more than any other writer, emphasizes women who interacted with the Lord. My guess is, he interviewed quite a number of women for writing his gospel; some of their experiences are recorded; and many of their observations are recorded by Luke.

Matthew, Mark and Luke all wrote their gospels around A.D. 50–60. John waited until A.D. 90 or later and wrote his. I believe that he read the other gospels and thought, "What is missing from these gospels? How can I add to this conversation?" Also, people develop a perspective of their life experiences, which might be quite different when a person is 90 as opposed to being 60.

Two things stand out in particular in John's gospel: a clear delineation of the gospel ("**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved**")<sup>3</sup>; and a clear identification of Jesus with God. In John, Jesus is God the Creator, the God to be worshiped; the Person who, if you have seen Him, you have seen the Father. The gospel message and the Divine Nature of Jesus are nowhere else more perspicuous than in the book of John. I believe that John has a more *holistic* view of the Lord; a view which is the result of seeing Who the Lord is from more of an historic-theological perspective.

Even though Jesus' Divine Nature is certainly found in Luke, it is not nearly as prominently featured as it is in John. There is a reason for this. Luke very closely follows the earthly ministry of Jesus. For the most part, Jesus did not go from town to town proclaiming, "I am the Son of God!" Throughout most of His public ministry of 3 or 4 years, Jesus allowed others to recognize and publically witness as to His identity; but Jesus did not do this very often Himself (there is a reason for this). Luke takes that into consideration in recording his biography of Jesus; John presents Jesus as the Son of God, the Creator of mankind and the universe.

Dr. Peter Pett makes this observation: *[John's] Gospel is full of incidental things which confirm that he was an eyewitness to the events that took place. He remembers almost incidentally the time at which events took place, the places at which they occurred, and significant details relating to the events which demonstrate his vivid memory of them. He also portrays himself as 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' who 'sat' (lay on a kind of mattress) next to Jesus at the last supper (John 21:20). And so important were his words seen to be that early church leaders wrote a superscription to confirm his authority (John 21:24).*<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> That is, the paternal line through Joseph, Jesus' legal father.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Gospel of John (book comments).

All of this information is very important because, 2000 years later, skeptics claim that Jesus is simply a legend. However, we have 4 men who record his biography, all of them writing in the same century in which He lived. Whether described by a man who observed Jesus directly, or by a man who never saw Jesus, but heard all about Him—the gospels are very similar. They describe the same man, but from a different perspective. No gospel appears to exaggerate more than the other; neither no gospel to be based upon a legend. There does not appear to be any indication of the formation of a legend or of a mythological person.

It often takes hundreds of years for legends to be formed; and it is nearly impossible to build a legend upon existing contemporary biographies. We know the era during which these biographies were written because theological writers from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century are already quoting from these biographies. By the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, there were already discussions about which writings were considered to be authoritative, and the gospels were the first to be considered (as well as the first writings to be universally accepted).

Dr. Peter Pett, BA BD Doctorate of Divinity, is an excellent teacher of Scripture and he explains how he got skeptical students to consider the reality of Jesus Christ.

### **Peter Pett on the Testimony of the Gospels**

When I was teaching in a comprehensive school in England I was once called on to take a class of fifth formers for a one off RE (Religious Education) class. They greeted me quite cynically on my arrival, although with no hostility, and made it quite clear that they thought that religion was purely speculative, and that I was wasting my time. What grounds, they asked, could there ever possibly be for accepting it? And besides, there was no proof that Jesus ever existed. They were not interested in anything that I had to say.

So I commenced by saying, 'well, let us look at the facts'. At least that brought a reaction. Their instant (and totally expected) reply was, 'there are no facts. It is all just people's beliefs'. To this I replied, 'OK. I will write a fact on the board and you can then tell me whether it is a fact or not.' I then proceeded to write on the board, 'The Gospels exist.' Of course they immediately began to say that that did not prove anything, but I pointed out that I was not suggesting that it proved anything about the Gospels (that is discovered by reading them sympathetically). All I wanted them to agree to was that they did exist. At last I got them to admit that it was true. In the end they admitted that whether they contained truth or not, they did exist. After all I had a copy of them with me. There was the first fact.

I then went on to point out that those Gospels contained teaching which was universally admired around the world. Wherever they reached the teaching within them was acknowledged by most thinking people, if not all, to be that of a 'master', indeed, a moral genius. This was not disputable. This too was a fact. They now had two facts. I then asked them where that teaching had come from. It had not existed in the previous century, and yet here it was suddenly arising in 1st century AD. What then was its source? Either we had to posit a number of moral geniuses who all wrote at the same time and pretended that what they wrote was spoken by someone else, (a unique event in the history of the world), or we had to posit that there was one moral genius of whose teaching they all wrote. One thing was sure it was not the production of a committee. Such unique gems do not result from committees. And had anyone even begun to manipulate it, its moral genius would have been lost. We know we have the genuine teaching of Jesus because if it had not been recorded accurately it would have been obviously spoiled. So now we had the fact that in 1st century AD there walked this earth a unique figure whose teaching is contained within the Gospels.

## Peter Pett on the Testimony of the Gospels

Then I pointed out that it did not matter what name we gave him. All we needed to see was that within that teaching that living genius had made claims that in any but a madman would be impossible. He had claimed to be the unique and only Son of God (e.g. Luke 20:1–18), and that although He would leave this world through death He would one day come in glory to gather those who were His to be with Him for ever. Now such a claim could be made by a religious fanatic or a madman. But this was no religious fanatic or madman. He was surrounded by religious fanatics, and He alone remained calm. Every word He spoke revealed sanity and moral purity and perfection. Read His teaching for yourself. If He was not sane, no one was. This too was a fact, for these teachings were not just added on, they were interwoven within all His teaching. They were an essential part of it.

So now they had three facts where previously they had had none, firstly that the Gospels exist, secondly that they contain a moral teaching second to none, spoken by someone who actually lived by them, and thirdly that He claimed that He had uniquely come from God, was looked at uniquely by God, and that He had come to fulfil God's will in a unique way. We will see more of this in the Gospel.

Thus I left them to think about something that they had never realised before. There were facts and they needed to think on them. And that is what the Gospel of Luke is all about. If you are not already a believer read it carefully and ask yourself, 'From where did this man have these things? Who was He'. For Luke is not just a history, it is a living reproduction. And it reveals Someone Who was 'out of this world'. And for your own sake, not for mine, you need to ensure that you come to the right conclusion about Him.

Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Introduction to the Book of Luke.

For me, when deciding which gospel to begin with, it was a toss up between Luke and John. John would have been an easier choice based upon the Greek, but more difficult when it came to chronology.

Unless otherwise indicated, the ESV; capitalized will be used below.

I will use the words *gospel* and *biography* almost interchangeably below.

### Gospel Comparison Chart

Author	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Date of writing <sup>4</sup>	A.D. 45–60	A.D. 40–55	A.D. 60–70	A.D. 80–100
Date of writing <sup>5</sup>	A.D. 58–68	A.D. 55–65	A.D. 60–68	A.D. 80–90

There are significant limitations on the dates—most people believe that Matthew, Mark and Luke wrote prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place in A.D. 70. This is never mentioned by any of the authors; and it would have been a very significant event to them. John waited perhaps 60 years before writing his gospel.

<sup>4</sup> From <https://synopticgospel.com/four-gospels-comparison-chart/> (accessed December 1, 2018).

<sup>5</sup> *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 1228 (footnote).

## Gospel Comparison Chart

Author	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
<p>Skepticism is expressed by unbelievers concerning the gap between the experience and the writing of the gospels. People often need to have some perspective on life to recognize what has been most important in their lives. Furthermore, the disciples were apparently quite active in spreading the gospel message, planting churches and avoiding persecution for several decades. Most of the disciples were doers; they were active men; they were not, for the most part, theologians or writers (Matthew may be the exception to this).</p>				
<p>Also, the disciples believed that Jesus would be returning any day; so writing a biography that would stand up for the ages was not something that they thought about at first. They were simply trying to evangelize the world. Furthermore, the disciples expected the return of Jesus any day—so leaving an historical record behind did not occur to them at first.</p>				
The author:	Matthew Levi, was the wealthy tax collector, whom Jesus called as a disciple.	John Mark, a close associate of Peter's (Peter the Apostle); also associated with Paul. Mark came on the scene after the Lord's public ministry.	Luke, a physician and an historian, also came on the scene after the public ministry of our Lord.	John ben Zebedee; the well-known Apostle and disciple of Jesus. He had been in business with Peter and his brother James (all were Apostles).
About the author	Matthew's authorship seems to be the most questioned of the biographers of Jesus; however, there is no compelling reason to think that this is anyone else wrote his gospel.	John Mark is an early Christian convert who likely never met Jesus.	Luke, is the only gentile writer of Scripture (insofar as we know <sup>6</sup> ). He systematically put together his gospel after conducting interviews with many people who knew Jesus.	John appears to have done much of his writing from the Isle of Patmos, when he was exiled. It is very likely that John wrote his gospel and letters <i>because</i> he had been exiled.
The author's associations	Matthew would have been one of the 12, and actually a part of the Lord's 3–4 year public ministry.	Mark served both with Peter and with Paul. Most of his knowledge of Jesus probably came from Peter.	Luke was an important person from the first century, a gentile convert. He worked with Paul and apparently met and spoke with many eyewitnesses	John, like Matthew, was familiar with the public ministry of the Lord; and with the other 11 disciples.

<sup>6</sup> We don't know who wrote *Hebrews*. Despite its name and emphasis, its author may be unknown *because* he is a gentile.



## Gospel Comparison Chart

Author	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
<p>At some point—and we do not necessarily know the motivation for these 4 men—they each individually decided to record the events of the Lord's life. Were they looking far into the future? Did they simply think this was another evangelistic tool? Did they simply want to record the events which they each experienced or knew about? We can only guess.</p>				
Possible motivation (s) for writing his gospel:	Perhaps Matthew, having slowed down later in life, realized he needed to record all that he saw.	Perhaps Mark wrote his gospel at the insistence of Peter; also who grew older and perhaps slowed down.	Luke seems to indicate that he received a great deal of information and possibly written accounts, which caused him to write his gospel.	John was exiled to the Isle of Patmos, leaving him with few options in life but to write. His dynamic relationship with God no doubt motivated him.
<p>The disciples have seen with their own eyes the most important events of human history. Two of them actually saw the Lord, in His short ministry, and after He had been raised from the dead. The other two were taking part in events which were changing the world. At some point, they took part in writing the most important literature in human history. Finally, their establishing Christianity and the message of the gospel turned the world upside down. No doubt, it took some time before they realized themselves the importance of what they had participated in.</p>				
Relationship with Jesus:	Matthew was a disciple called by Jesus and who was with Jesus for 3–4 years. He wrote his gospel a few decades after this experience.	Mark apparently never met Jesus; and would have been a 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation Christian. He would only know what people have told him about Jesus.	Luke appears to have had no direct association with Jesus, but was also a 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation Christian like Mark (but likely older).	John was a disciple of Jesus, living with Him and learning from Him for 3–4 years. John was part of Jesus' inner circle of disciples.
Relationship with other gospel writers:	Matthew knew John as one of the disciples of Jesus. Matthew likely had access to Mark's biography of Jesus.	Mark appears to have written Peter's gospel. It is believed that he wrote the first gospel.	Luke had access to both Matthew and Mark's gospels. He probably met Mark.	John certainly knew Matthew; but we don't know about Mark or Luke. John likely read all 3 gospels before writing his own. I say that because John's gospel is so unique of the four.

## Gospel Comparison Chart

Author	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Associations	Although Matthew is sometimes paired with another disciple, there is no indication of his close association with anyone.	John Mark worked with both Peter and Paul, although he seems to have had a falling out with Paul.	Luke is closely associated with Paul at the end of Acts as traveling with him to spread the gospel and to plant local churches.	John seems to be a part of the inner circle of disciples, which included James and Peter.
Writer's style:	A man fully familiar with the Old Testament. He may have desired to teach, given his knowledge.	Mark seems to be very interested in plot progression and action—likely a result of his association with Peter.	Luke was an historian who provided an historical texture to Jesus' ministry.	John, although his Greek is simple, approaches Jesus from a sophisticated theological perspective.
Previous employment	Matthew was a tax collector.	Unknown.	Luke was apparently well-educated and previously a physician.	John was co-owner of a fishing business with his brother James and associate Peter.
Other writings	None	None	Acts	1John, 2John, 3John and Revelation
Audience	Jewish believers and unbelievers, to show Jesus is undeniably the Savior-Messiah.	It is said the Mark wrote for gentiles and Romans.  He has concern for those being persecuted.	Specifically written for Theophilus.  Assuming Luke thought of a wider audience, then he wrote for gentiles, believers and unbelievers, to tell them that the Jewish Messiah came for them.	John, although Jewish, seems to have a more universal approach. Many believe that his is the gospel for the newly formed church—the universal church.  The emphasis on the gospel suggests that John thought that unbelievers might read his gospel.



## Gospel Comparison Chart

Author	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Layout	Arranged in 5 sections of narrative followed by a discourse; possibly intending to mimic the 5 books of the Torah.	Arranged into 4 sections by geographical location: Galilee, other journeys, back to Galilee, and the final week in Jerusalem.	Arranged into 3 main sections covering 3 periods of time and place: Galilee, other places, and Jerusalem for the final week.	Arranged chronologically into 4 main sections.
Style	Rhythmic; poetic.	Fast-moving; emphasis upon action.	Precise, historic, educated and scholarly.	Written in the 1 <sup>st</sup> person; very simple Greek.
As an aside, the dramatically different styles of these authors suggests to me that they originally wrote their biographies in the koine Greek language. I have heard some claim that the New Testament was first written in Aramaic; but I do not find any evidence of that.				
Length	18,345 Greek words; 23,534 in the NASB.	11,304 Greek words; 14,833 in the NASB.	19,482 Greek words; 25,794 in the NASB.	15,635 Greek words; 19,519 in the NASB.
Beginning of each gospel:	Matthew begins with the genealogy which confirms Jesus' paternal link to King David.	Mark begins with the ministry of John the Herald, who prepared the way of the Lord.	Luke has a formal introduction, telling us for whom the book is written and how Luke composed it.	John goes back to the beginning of creation. Then John speaks of the herald, the calling of the disciples, and the wedding at Cana.
Primary focus of Jesus.	Jesus as David's Greater Son, the Messiah-King, fulfilling the promises of the Old Testament.	Jesus is God's suffering Servant, man's Redeemer, and Prophet. He is a healer and miracle worker.	Jesus is fully man, a man of prayer, is the ultimate Teacher. He reveals great concern for women, the poor and gentiles.	Jesus is fully God, the Son of God, the Living Word of God, and the Creator of heaven and earth.

## Gospel Comparison Chart

Author	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Unique features	Matthew provides 50 direct quotations from the OT and 75 allusions to the OT. He calls Jesus the Son of David 9x.	Written in a simple Greek. Also, Aramaic words are defined, suggesting a non-Jewish audience.	Luke has perhaps the most difficult Greek, featuring many words not found elsewhere in the New Testament.  Many quotes from the Greek Septuagint.	John writes in the simplest Greek; it is the perfect assignment for a first-year Greek student to translate.  The only gospel referring to Jesus as the Word.
Unique sections	Christ as a child; the Sermon on the Mount	He explains some Jewish terms and customs and Aramaic words to a non-Jewish audience.	The rich man and Lazarus; salvation of the thief on the cross; the prodigal son.	The turning of water into wine; raising Lazarus from the dead; the <i>I Am</i> statements; Thomas doubting.
Unique emphasis:	Jesus fulfills Old Testament promises, and is therefore the promised Messiah.  Matthew is filled with OT quotations.	The actions and ministry of Jesus. Jesus' deeds are in the forefront.  There is less emphasis on chronological order in Mark, according to Papias of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> century.	It is clear that Luke is well-researched, including a plethora of historic details in his gospel. This is integrated with the Lord's teachings.  Also, Luke features an emphasis on women believers during this time period.	An holistic approach to Jesus, His Person and deeds. John provides some emphasis not in the other gospels.  Mentions only 8 miracles of Jesus and calls them signs.
Key phrase, key word:	<i>Kingdom of Heaven</i> (found 32 times in Matthew and nowhere else).	<i>Immediately</i> (found 36 times in Mark; 14 times in Matthew)	<i>Kingdom of God</i> (found 32 times; 14 times in Mark)	<i>Believe, believers</i> , etc. (occurs 99 times; 16 times in Mark)
Although many identify <i>Son of Man</i> with Luke, it occurs 25 times in Luke and 30 times in Matthew (also, 14 times in Mark and 13 times in John).				
Quotations from the Old Testament <sup>7</sup>	96	34	58	40

<sup>7</sup> These numbers are taken from the [Blue Letter Bible site](#), accessed December 28, 2018.

## Gospel Comparison Chart

Author	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
<p>The specific quotations are listed at the Blue Letter Bible site <a href="#">here</a> and <a href="#">here</a>. The verses are actually quoted with their OT counterparts <a href="#">here</a>. Luke, in the book of Acts, makes an additional 57 references to the OT. Only Paul, previously a pharisee, has as many references as Matthew (74 alone in the book of Romans and 173 overall).</p>				
Interesting facts of author's unique approach:	Matthew has more references to money than any of the other biographers.	Mark does not mention the words <i>Messiah</i> , <i>law</i> , <i>Samaria</i> or <i>Samaritan</i> .	<p>Luke has far more references to political leaders and their actions.</p> <p>Luke focuses on the women in his gospel far more than the other writers.</p> <p>The only gospel with the words <i>redeem</i>, <i>redemption</i>.</p>	<p>John seemed to feature more interactions with the disciples.</p> <p>Mentions 6 Jewish feasts/ celebrations; including the Passover (3x).</p>
Passover	Only one Passover is mentioned—the final one.	Same as Matthew.	Same as Matthew.	3 or 4 Passover celebrations are referenced.
Geographic Emphasis	Galilee Ministry			Judæa
The end of each gospel:	<p>Jesus makes some appearances to the disciples; a plot is hatched among the chief priests to explain the empty tomb.</p> <p>Jesus encourages His disciples.</p>	The final passage is strongly disputed (Mark 16:9–20). How much of it is accurate is unknown and how it was added is unknown as well.	Several post-resurrection narratives are recorded. Then Jesus is taken up into heaven.	Jesus appears to His disciples for the 3 <sup>rd</sup> time (specifically to 8 of them). They are fishing. Jesus speaks to Peter and tells him 3x, “Feed my sheep.” <sup>8</sup> Jesus also tells Peter and John how they will die.

<sup>8</sup> The wording is slightly changed each time.

## Gospel Comparison Chart

Author	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Final passage	Mat 28:18–20 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."	Mark 16:19–20 So then the Lord Jesus, after He had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs.	Luke 24:51–53 While He blessed them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.	John 21:25 Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.
Uniqueness of material:	42%	7%	59%	92%

The uniqueness percentages, which I took from *the Open Bible*, are quite logical. Each successive biographer is aware of the previous biographies, but is also aware of information not found in previous gospels; and desires to share that additional information with the body of Christ. John, in particular, had a great deal to share about the Lord's life, which was not previously covered.

### Comments:

We will accept the traditional names assigned to these books as the names of the authors. Although these names are not found *in* the gospel text to indicate authorship, there is no compelling reason to assume that someone else authored these books.

Matthew, Mark and Luke are known as the synoptic gospels; they can fairly easily be set up in parallel. John's gospel is very different from theirs.

Some of this material is from:

*The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 1228 (footnote).

<https://synopticgospel.com/four-gospels-comparison-chart/> (accessed December 1, 2018).

<https://owlcation.com/humanities/Comparing-the-Gospels-Matthew-Mark-Luke-and-John> (accessed December 1, 2018).

<https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/273-examining-the-four-gospels> accessed December 1, 2018.

Also from [so4j.com](http://so4j.com); accessed November 21, 2018.

How many people in history, prior to the invention of the printing press, have 4 biographies written by their contemporaries? I would suggest that there is no one in human history prior to A.D. 1500 who has 4 contemporaries who have written biographies of him. For one thing, few people are that interesting; secondly, few people would allow anyone to be so close as to be bold enough to write a biography. But, even more incredible is, the bulk of these 4 biographies primarily focus on a 3 or 4 year period of time in the life of Jesus. There is a smattering of early information found in Matthew and Luke (and John does go back to the beginning of history); but these biographies primarily concentrate on the public ministry of Jesus Christ.

Speaking of which, Jesus is the most unlikely *religious figure* in human history. He traveled mostly on foot; He did not travel very far (mostly He taught in Galilee region and in Jerusalem—traveling perhaps 60 or 70 miles); and He never wrote anything down. We do not have the gospel of Jesus or the epistles or psalms of Jesus (actually, the entire Bible is that).

Furthermore, His public ministry was a scant 3 or 4 years long. We should not even know Who He is; there is nothing in the basic facts of His life and ministry which suggest that Jesus should be remembered at all. Yet, Jesus is the most well-known Man in human history. We divide our history into what happened before Him and what takes place in human history after Him. Not only are there 4 biographies of Him written by 4 contemporaries; but, there have been more books written about Him subsequently than about any other man in human history.

Even those who reject Jesus, cannot help but use His Name in order to swear.

Unlike other religious figures (like Confucius, Buddha or Mohammed), Jesus is essential to Christianity. Confucius, Buddha and Mohammed are not necessary to their respective religions. Had those religions been begun by Larry, Moe and Curly, they would have been the same religion. All religions are a set of beliefs and precepts; and if someone is able to sell those beliefs and practices to a large enough population, then it becomes a significant religion. But whether Curly tells you to pray 5x a day towards Mecca or Mohammed says to do that, it makes no difference. You still have to engage in the same act in order to please God.

Jesus is different. Even though there are a set of precepts which are applicable to the believer in the Church Age, what is fundamental to our thinking is, first, we have to place our faith in Jesus Christ. Not in His teachings, not in His parables, not in any set of rituals that He taught, but in the Person of Jesus Christ. I am saved because Jesus Christ died for my sins. I am sinful before God and have no access to God because of my sinfulness—my sin nature, my personal acts of sin, and the imputation of Adam's sin to me. It is only through Jesus the Person that I have a relationship with God.

Jesus took my sins upon Himself and paid the penalty for those sins. Because of Jesus, I now have access to God. He is integral to the faith of Christianity. Without Jesus specifically, there is no forgiveness of sin; there is no Christian life; there is no relationship with God. It is the Lord's death on the cross and His taking upon Himself the penalty for my sins that saves me. If I do not stand upon the Person of Jesus, then no matter what I do in my life, I have no relationship with God—no matter how much I try to obey the Bible or the teachings of Jesus. My access to God is based wholly upon Jesus dying for my sins; my access to God is based wholly upon God accepting my faith in Christ as fundamental and sufficient.



You will notice that I said nothing about any specific church, denomination, sect or group. When it comes to salvation, the local church that you attend is immaterial, as long as they present Jesus Christ as the only Mediator between man and God.

A person might attend church regularly; he might take communion; he might serve on the board of deacons. But—and nearly every denomination will teach this—if he has not placed his faith in Jesus, he is not saved, no matter how *Christian* he acts. Every person in the world who meets Charley Brown might say, “Now, that Charley is a real Christian—he lives it in his daily life.” But, if Charley has not placed his faith in Christ Jesus, then he is not saved and he will spend eternity in hell—no matter how many people would testify in his behalf.

Furthermore, once you have exercised faith in Jesus Christ, you are saved forever. You cannot lose your salvation, because it is based upon Jesus and what He did for us upon the cross, not upon anything that we do. Some believers even take the attitude, “Well, thank you, God; I will see you in eternity.” And, with that, they go off and they do whatever they want to do. However, even with that attitude, we cannot lose our salvation because our relationship with God is completely based upon the finished work of Christ, not upon anything that we can think, say or do after the fact. Our faith in Jesus Christ is a one-time act; and it places us with God in eternity, no matter what we do after that moment.

The *where* of Jesus is important. We are going to read about Him traveling from place to place. Therefore, this map will help us to orient to His movements.

**Israel During the Time of Jesus** (a map); from [Conforming to Jesus.com](http://ConformingToJesus.com); accessed December 1, 2018.

Jesus visited many synagogues in the Galilee area, indicating that the people there were mostly Jewish. South in Judæa, this would have also been occupied by Jews.

These 4 biographies each view Jesus from a slightly different angle. For this study, we will focus on Luke’s understanding of the Lord. For some incidents, we will refer to other gospels; but, for the most part, I will try to confine our study to Luke’s work.





**Luke, as the Author of the Gospel of Luke/ Canonicity:** Luke has been presumed to be the author of this book, even though his name is not actually affixed to it. This tradition goes back to the early Christian writings of Justin Martyr (ca. 100-165) and Tertullian (born ca. 160). Both men identify the author as Luke. Even though these writers are making these claims perhaps 80 years after Luke has written *Luke* and *Acts*, these men would have gotten this information from tradition and/or writings from their era. These men are writing so soon after the century of Christ, that we may assume that they are accurate with a reasonable certitude.

The gospels, by the way, were recognized very early on as divinely inspired; and they were each identified by their human author. Pseudo Barnabas (70–130); Clement of Rome (96–97), Ignatius (110), Polycarpa (110–150) all recognized one or more of the gospels as divinely inspired, along with 13 other individual witnesses living in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries. These early witnesses both help to confirm the New Testament canon which we have today, and further insure that changes or editing did not take place in the centuries that followed. Furthermore, such editing would have been virtually impossible, as copies of the various books were scattered all over the Roman world and beyond. Furthermore, these ancient scholars just referred to—they often quoted from the gospels and from various epistles, taking them as authoritative writings. If you have thousands of copies of these gospels (or quotes from the gospels) being circulated, it is pretty hard for someone to decide to make a change or an insertion.

Besides these individual witnesses, there are 5 canons of New Testament Scripture assembled prior to A.D. 400; 3 translations; and 4 church councils. It is from these various witnesses that we know who wrote which books (or letters); and why we have the canon of Scripture that we have today. Let me add, these are the witnesses that we are aware of 2000 years or so after the fact. There would have been hundreds of individuals, as well as other canon listings, translations and councils who have been lost to history.

One of *the* hot topics of Christian theologians in the first 3 or 4 centuries of Christianity was canonicity. *Which* books were canonical? It is highly unlikely that they thought of inspiration in the terms that we do today. They would have simply wanted to know, which books were authoritative. *If I am making a theological point*, Polycarpa might muse, *from whom may I quote in order to establish that point?*

There were two primary considerations: who wrote the book and was he an Apostle or closely associated with an Apostle? Obviously, they could only consider books written in the first century and they needed to know who the author was. Interestingly enough, there is an exception to this rule. The book of Hebrews was accepted into the canon, but without knowing who wrote it.

Insofar as the gospels are concerned, neither Luke nor John Mark (the author of Mark) had been actual eyewitnesses to these events (Luke would have been an eyewitness to some of the things recorded in the final chapters of Acts). However, Mark's gospel is essentially Peter's gospel; but, for some reason, Mark recorded it. For all we know, he could have been Peter's secretary/amanuensis.

In his travels with Paul, Luke apparently had opportunities to meet with many eyewitnesses; and it is clear in the first few chapters that Luke must have met with Mary, the mother of Jesus. There is information in the book of Luke that only she would have known.

We also can guess that Luke wrote his gospel between A.D. 60 and 65. Peter's death, Paul's death and the fall of Jerusalem are not recorded in the book of Acts; suggesting that Luke completed his work (the gospel of Luke and Acts) before any of those significant events took place.

Luke, realizing that the Advent of Jesus Christ was the most important event of all history, and because he knew many people who were associated with Jesus Christ at the beginning of His public ministry; Luke endeavored to write down, in chronological order (for the most part), the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Luke does not have a preface to his book, nor did he write a forward, so we do not know all those that he spoke with. However, since this is the Word of God, we may trust the historical accuracy of all these events.

Luke, the man, is mentioned directly in Scripture only 3 times: in Col. 4:14 2Tim. 4:11 Philemon 1:24. If not for the title of His book *Kata Loukon* (Κατὰ Λουκόν), which means *according to Luke*, we would not know that Luke wrote the Gospel according to Luke (we know that Luke wrote Acts because it was written to the same person the book of Luke was written for).

Much of this study was written based upon information which I have accumulated over the years, as well as a careful, word-by-word examination of the text. However, I did refer to some specific teachers from time to time.

### Back Up and Occasional Bibliography

Stephen Ellis on the [book of Luke](#).  
 Dr. Dan Hill in [Grace Notes](#).  
 James Allen at [Alive and Powerful](#).

I did not refer to these studies throughout. However, I read them carefully for the introduction and for any passages where I was either confused by or was unable to provide a full explanation that I was satisfied with.

One thing I ought to point out—the disciples did not necessarily know it all (nor did the prophets of old). Paul was probably the most doctrinally oriented of all the Apostles, and yet, you can know more than Paul knows. My point being, even though Luke records His gospel in accordance with the leading of God the Holy Spirit, Luke does not know everything. He hangs with Paul and he knows a lot of stuff; but he does not know it all. It is possible for you to know and understand more than Luke; and even more than Paul.

How can I make such a statement? Easy, and I will back it up. All of the gospels and most of the epistles had been written by the time that John was exiled to Patmos. He had access to much of this material, and he read the other biographies and he knew what they did not have is, a clear delineation of the gospel and the fact that Jesus is God come to live among mankind. What could be more fundamental to our faith than those two facts; and yet, after studying 3 gospels, those two important founding principles do not jump out at us as they do in the gospel of John. My point being, these truths are fundamental to the faith, and yet, they are not found in the 3 existing gospels.

There are many important doctrines which have been fully developed not necessarily in any passage in the Word of God, but by comparing many passages of the Word of God together. The concept of typology certainly goes back at least to the letter to the Hebrews; but this has been developed in far more detail *after* the completion of the canon of Scripture. What the inspiration of Scriptures actually means—that comes *after* the canon was completed. Now, all of these doctrines are based upon the existing Scriptures, but there is nothing to indicate that they were fully developed during the ministry of Paul or Peter or John.

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## Addendum

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