

# The Gospels

## Lesson 19- Spiritual Discipleship and Growth

**Intro:** As we study the individual Gospels we are confronted with both similarities and differences in each account. The first three Gospels have been termed “synoptic,” meaning different accounts of mostly the same events.

There is also said to be a synoptic problem, and we will briefly consider whether such a problem really does exist.

### A. The Synoptic “Problem”:

The Gospels were produced independently, at different times, in different places, for different purposes. Yet for all of this, they perfectly harmonize in their witness of Jesus as Messiah.

This so called synoptic problem is raised by unbelieving “scholars” who question how these accounts were compiled. We will consider three hypotheses:

#### a. The Oral Tradition Hypotheses:

This theory assumes that each of the writers derived the substance of his writing from oral narratives. Naturally, each of these oral traditions varied slightly over time, hence the differences.

#### b. The Mutual Use Hypotheses:

This theory holds that the authors used each other’s writings; however, there has never been agreement as to who the borrowers were.

#### c. The Documentary Hypotheses:

Most of those who believe in a synoptic problem agree on at least two possible common sources used by the writers.

1. Some believe that Matthew and Luke drew largely from Mark. Only about 50-55 verses of Mark are not found in Matthew and Luke.

2. This would mean that Mark’s Gospel was the basis for the other two.

The Q Document:

1. This is a (non-existent) Greek document that is claimed to be the source for all three of the Gospels. The reason for this theory is that there are 250 verses common to Matthew and Luke, not found in Mark.

These theories never consider the possibility that all three writers wrote independently and unaided as they were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Our finite minds cannot comprehend the plan and program of God and His sovereign ability to bring it to pass. We are told *“the Scriptures are able to make thee wise unto salvation.”* How can we suppose to have wisdom apart from them enough to comprehend their purpose?

2 Peter 1:16-21 Peter states that he was an \_\_\_\_\_.

### B. The Gospels:

When we turn to the first four books of the New Testament we see that the headings are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. In the first there are 28 chapters; in the second, 16; in the third, 24; and in the fourth, 21; 89 chapters all together.

The first three are considered to be synoptic (Greek: “sun” + “optis” = “together seeing”) because they present the same general view of the several events. The fourth follows lines of its own.

These Gospels are the most precious writings in all the world. Were it not for them there would be no preceding Old Testament and no following Acts, Epistles, and Revelation. They are the heart of Divine Revelation because they are the record of God on Earth, in the Person of His Son, for the purpose of redemption.

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### C. Authorship:

#### 1. Writers.

These accounts were written by the men whose names they bear.

a. There is much controversy about the first and fourth Gospels, as to who the writers were. Remember, in the original writings you do not find the words “The Gospel According to Matthew”.

b. Remember again the Holy Spirit is the Author of \_\_\_\_\_ and the human instrument is of little importance. 2 Tim. 3:16

#### 2. Writers backgrounds.

a. Three were \_\_\_\_\_.

b. One was a \_\_\_\_\_.

c. Matthew and John were Apostles

d. Mark was a companion of \_\_\_\_\_.

e. Luke was not related to any of the 12 and was a Greek.

### D. Date and Place of Writings:

We cannot be positive of the exact dates, but the most probable are:

#### 1. Matthew:

a. Written approximately 37 AD.

b. At Jerusalem.

#### 2. Mark:

a. Written between 57 and 68 AD.

b. At Rome.

#### 3. Luke:

a. Written between 63 and 68 AD.

b. At Caesarea.

#### 4. John:

Written between 85 and 90 AD

b. At Ephesus.

**D. Theme:** The word “gospel” means \_\_\_\_\_!

1. Matthew: Presents Jesus as the King. In His genealogy He is traced back to David through Solomon. It is in this gospel that the kingdom of heaven is announced so often: Matthew’s gospel is written to Christian Jews.

2. Mark: Gives us a picture of Jesus as the faithful Servant of God. It is really the Gospel of the works of Christ. Because it was written for the Romans whose watchword was “power,” it brings before us the matchless power of the “mighty Miracle Worker” and the power of His love in the greatest of all miracles, His death and resurrection.

3. Luke: Message is that the Lord Jesus Christ, the “Son of Man” in His earthly ministry was perfect man even as He was perfect God. Luke’s gospel was written to gentiles.

4. John: Gave his reason for writing in John 20:31, to show that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Saviour of all who believe on Him. He did not attempt to give a history of the life of Christ, but chose some of the great signs and messages of our Lord. This is why John’s gospel is so very different from the other Gospels. The key word is “Life.” The gospel of John had a broad audience.