



# Four Gospels: One Jesus

A Bible Study for Swamp Lutheran Church

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# Four Gospels: One Jesus

## Session Outline

- Session One: Introduction to the Gospels,  
The Gospel of Mark
- Session Two: The Gospel of Matthew
- Session Three: The Gospel of Luke
- Session Four: The Gospel of John

# What Do You See?





## Four Gospels; Portraits of the Same Jesus Through Different Lenses

Though the basic story of Jesus is the same, each Gospel writer portrays Jesus in slightly different ways. The differences stem from the **sources** they used to tell the story, the **time** they were written, the **community** they wrote for, and the **purpose** of their writing.



# The Symbols of the Four Gospels

Derived from Ezekiel's vision of Four Living Creatures. Assigning each Gospel to a creature dates from the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D.

- Matthew: Winged Man or Angel; Christ's humanity and reason.
- Mark: Winged Lion, Christ's courage and royalty.
- Luke: Winged Ox or Calf, Christ as sacrifice and priest.
- John: Winged Eagle, Christ's divinity soaring to the heavens.



St. Matthew



St. Mark



St. John



St. Luke



# Four Gospels: Two Groups

- The Synoptic Gospels: *Matthew, Mark, Luke*

“Synoptic” from the Greek meaning “To see together” (*syn*-together, *optic*-to see) These three Gospels have a common perspective on the life and ministry of Jesus. They share many of the same stories, even identical words, though there are significant differences.

- The Gospel of John *stands by itself*

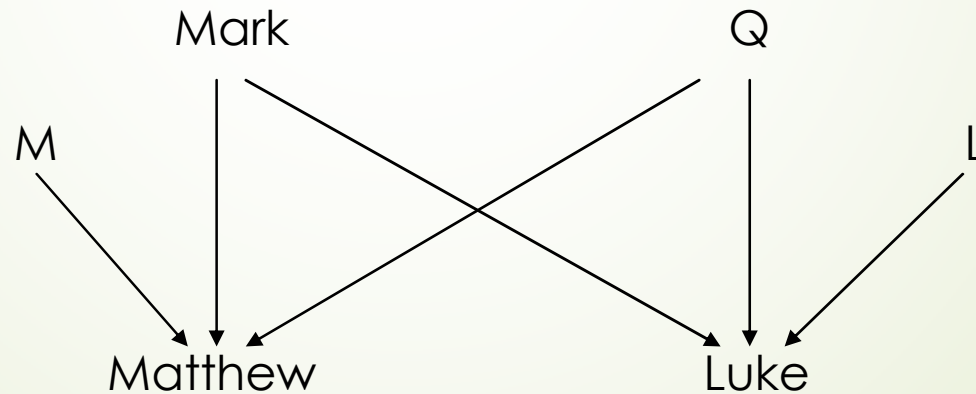


# The Four Gospels: Date, Purpose, Audience

- ▶ Matthew: Dates from around 80-90 A.D. Written primarily to Jews in order to prove Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of the coming Messiah.
- ▶ Mark: Dates from around 65-70 A.D., making it the earliest Gospel. Written for Gentiles to present Jesus both as Messiah and Son of God.
- ▶ Luke: Dates from around 70-90 A.D. Written for Greeks to show Jesus as a universal savior.
- ▶ John: Dates from around the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D., making it the last Gospel. Written primarily as instruction for the early Christian Church.

# The Synoptic Gospels: Sources

- Mark is the earliest Gospel. It is the primary source of material for both Matthew and Luke. 75% of Mark is found in both Matthew and Luke; 42% of Luke and 56% of Matthew. Over 97% of Mark is used by either Matthew or Luke.
- Matthew and Luke share a source of over 200 verses that are not included in Mark. Scholars call this source “Q,” from the German word *quelle*, meaning “source.” 25% of Matthew and Luke come from Q.
- Matthew used his own source of special traditions called “M.” 19%
- Luke used his own source of special traditions called “L.” 33%





# A Synoptic View of the Healing of a Leper

Matthew 8:2-3

**And** behold,  
**a leper** came  
  
and worships  
  
**him, saying:**  
Lord, **if you wish,**  
**I can be cleansed.**  
  
**And he stretched out his**  
**hand and touched him,**  
**saying:**  
**I wish it; be cleansed.**  
**And immediately**  
his **leprosy**  
  
was cleansed.

Mark 1:40-42

**And,** calling out to him,  
there comes to him **a**  
**leper**  
  
and kneeling and  
  
**saying to him:**  
**If you wish,**  
**I can be cleansed.**  
**And,** moved with  
compassion,  
**he stretched out his**  
**hand and touched him**  
and **says to him:**  
**I wish it; be cleansed.**  
**And immediately**  
the **leprosy**  
left him,  
and he was cleansed.

Luke 5:12-13

**And** behold,  
**a** man full of **leprosy.**  
But, upon seeing Jesus,  
he fell upon his face  
and requested  
**him, saying:**  
Lord, **if you wish,**  
**I can be cleansed.**  
  
**And he stretched out his**  
**hand and touched him,**  
**saying:**  
**I wish it; be cleansed.**  
**And immediately**  
the **leprosy**  
left him.



# The Gospel of Mark

- Mark is the only Gospel writer to use the word “gospel” to begin his composition: “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” Mark 1:1
- The Greek word for “gospel” is “*euaggeliou*” from which we get the English word “evangelical.” “Gospel” literally means “good news.”
- Mark announces his purpose at the very start of his gospel: to tell the world the “good news” of Jesus Christ (“Christ” is the Greek word for the Hebrew word “Messiah”) who is also “Son of God.” “Son of God” is a title signifying royal authority and salvific power common the Greek-speaking (now Roman controlled) world.
- Paul does not consider the “gospel” to be a book about Jesus Christ, but rather a message concerning salvation. Mark develops the good news of salvation in Jesus to include the whole story of Jesus’ ministry.



## Who Was Mark?

- ▶ Like the other three gospels there is no name associated with authorship.
- ▶ A fairly early Church tradition ascribes authorship to “Mark.”
- ▶ This may be the same John Mark mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. (Acts 12:12, 15:37) John Mark knew the apostle Peter, and later may have composed the work as a summary of Peter’s preaching concerning Jesus.



# Special Characteristics of Mark's Gospel

- ▶ 97% of Mark appears in either Matthew or Luke.
- ▶ Mark depicts Jesus as being constantly active. A favorite word in Mark is the Greek word meaning "immediately," or "at once" or "then." Used over 40 times in 16 chapters. Ex. Mark 1:17-20 <sup>17</sup>And Jesus said to them (Simon and Andrew), "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." <sup>18</sup>And *immediately* they left their nets and followed him. <sup>19</sup>As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. <sup>20</sup>*Immediately* he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.