

## The Gospels

Why are there four gospels? Could God not have merely given us one and it been sufficient? These questions are often asked regarding the first four books of the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). The reason there are four gospels is that each one was written at a specific time, to a specific audience, for a specific purpose, portraying Christ differently.

### Matthew – the Jerusalem phase @ AD 40-50 (Acts 1-12)

This gospel was probably written first by the disciple Matthew (Levi). Because an account of Jesus' life and teachings was needed to unify the early church in Jerusalem and surrounding regions, the 12 placed this great responsibility on the former tax collector. This book was written to Jewish readers to prove that Jesus was the *fulfillment* of the prophecies of the Holy Scriptures (Old Testament). Thus, Christ is portrayed as the Messiah/King who would bring deliverance to His people. The genealogy in chapter 1 is clearly Jewish, tracing Jesus back through David to Abraham, the father of the Jewish people. Key verses – 1:1; 16:16; 28:18-20, Key word – *fulfilled*

### Luke – the Gentile phase @ AD 50-62 (Acts 13-28)

This gospel was probably written second by Dr. Luke, a close friend of the apostle Paul. As the church grew and spread there arose a need for the presentation of the gospel suited to meet the needs of the Greek-speaking world. This book portrays Jesus as the promised Messiah that became the perfect Man in order to provide the salvation for both Jew and Gentile. Luke's is the longest gospel. Key verse – 19:10, Key word(s) – *Son of Man*

### Mark – the Roman phase @ AD 62-67

This gospel was probably written third by John Mark as he wrote down a series of sermons/speeches delivered by Peter to the Christians in Rome. Peter referred only to the incidents in the life of Jesus that he had been an eyewitness therefore there is no birth narrative. It must also be noted that the Roman mindset was not as concerned about lineage or genealogy, but economic status (rulers and servants). This book portrays Christ as the suffering servant. Mark's is the shortest gospel. Key verse – 1:1; 10:45, Key word – *immediately*

### John – the Johannine supplement @ AD 80-95

John, the son of Zebedee, the apostle and beloved disciple, wrote the fourth gospel around the end of the first century to the entire world. John's purpose is to prove that Jesus Christ is the unique Son of God, in whom if anyone believes, he will have eternal life (3:16). John's gospel has few parables however it is built on seven key miracles (called signs). Jesus also makes seven personal "I Am" claims that point to His deity. Key verses – 3:16; 20:31, Key words – *believe, eternal life*