



BIBLE CONFIDENCE SERIES

Four Gospels - One Jesus

Why Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John tell the same good news from different perspectives

One Savior. Four faithful witnesses.

The four Gospels are not competing versions of Jesus. Together they give us a rich, trustworthy portrait of His identity, words, works, death, and resurrection.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Each Gospel helps us see Jesus clearly—and the four together help us see more than any one account could show by itself.

“These are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.”

John 20:31 NLT

Begin with curiosity. Let each witness lead you to Jesus.



START HERE

Why are there four Gospels?

God chose to give us four inspired accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Each writer selected and arranged true events for a particular audience and purpose under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:1–4; John 20:30–31; 2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:20–21).

The writers do not tell us everything Jesus said or did. John openly explains that a complete record would be far larger than a single book (John 21:25). Instead, each Gospel presents a faithful, purposeful account that helps readers recognize who Jesus is and respond to Him.

One message, distinct perspectives

One message

All four Gospels proclaim Jesus as the promised Messiah and Son of God. They testify to His authoritative teaching, mighty works, sacrificial death, and bodily resurrection (Matthew 16:16; Mark 1:1; Luke 24:44–49; John 20:28–31).

Distinct perspectives

The writers emphasize different events, teachings, themes, and details. Distinct selection is not contradiction. It is what we should expect when faithful witnesses communicate the same truth with different purposes and audiences in view.

The Synoptic Gospels and John

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are often called the Synoptic Gospels because they view Jesus' ministry through a broadly similar framework and share many events, teachings, and patterns. John includes more material not found in the other three and often develops extended conversations and explicit claims about Jesus' identity (John 1:1–18; 8:58; 10:30; 14:6).

This does not create two different stories. The Synoptics and John illuminate the same Jesus from complementary angles.

A helpful picture

Four windows can look into the same room from different sides. Each window shows something real; together they provide a fuller view.



MEET THE GOSPELS

Four complementary portraits of Jesus

Matthew — The promised King

Matthew repeatedly connects Jesus with the Old Testament and presents Him as the promised Messiah, the Son of David, and the King who fulfills God's purposes. Its five major teaching sections give special attention to life in God's kingdom.

Key passages to explore: Matthew 1:1; 4:17; 5–7; 13; 21:1–11; 28:18–20

Mark — The powerful Servant

Mark moves quickly through Jesus' actions, authority, suffering, and service. It shows the Son of Man who came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.

Key passages to explore: Mark 1:1; 1:21–28; 4:35–41; 8:27–38; 10:45; 15:39

Luke — The Savior for all people

Luke offers an orderly account rooted in careful investigation. It highlights prayer, the Holy Spirit, compassion, joy, outsiders, women, the poor, and the good news extending to every nation.

Key passages to explore: Luke 1:1–4; 2:10–11; 4:16–21; 7:36–50; 15; 19:10; 24:44–49

John — The eternal Son of God

John invites readers to believe that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God. Through signs, conversations, and "I am" statements, it emphasizes His divine identity, His relationship with the Father, and the eternal life found in Him.

Key passages to explore: John 1:1–18; 2:1–11; 6:35; 8:58; 10:30; 11:25–27; 20:30–31

Keep the portraits together

These descriptions are helpful memory anchors, not rigid limits. Matthew also shows Jesus serving, Mark presents Him as King, Luke reveals His divine authority, and John records His humility and sacrifice. Every Gospel presents the same whole Jesus.



READING WITH CONFIDENCE

Why do some details differ?

Parallel accounts sometimes include different details, wording, order, or numbers of people mentioned. A difference becomes a contradiction only when two claims cannot both be true in the same sense and at the same time. Most Gospel differences are complementary rather than mutually exclusive.

Four questions to ask before assuming a contradiction

- Is one writer giving a shorter account while another includes additional detail?
- Is one person being highlighted without claiming that person was the only one present?
- Is the writer arranging material by theme rather than giving a complete moment-by-moment chronology?
- Could two similar events or sayings have occurred on different occasions during Jesus' ministry?

A simple example: the angels at the tomb

Matthew mentions an angel who spoke to the women (Matthew 28:2–7), while Luke reports two men in dazzling clothes (Luke 24:4–7). Matthew does not say that only one angel was present; he focuses on the one who spoke. One spokesperson and two present can both be true.

A simple example: the inscription above Jesus

Each Gospel records wording from the charge placed above Jesus (Matthew 27:37; Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38; John 19:19–20). The accounts preserve the same central claim—Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews—while selecting different portions of the inscription. John also notes that it was written in three languages, making variations in reported wording unsurprising.

Read patiently

We do not need to force every account into identical wording. First honor what each writer chose to communicate. Then compare the accounts to see how their details enrich the complete picture.

What about order?

Ancient biographical writing could arrange material chronologically, geographically, or thematically. Luke sometimes signals sequence explicitly (Luke 1:3; 8:1), while other transitions may simply mean “then” or “at that time.” Faithful reading notices the wording each author actually uses rather than assuming every section claims a strict timeline.



KEEP GOING

How to read the four Gospels together

- Read one Gospel from beginning to end before jumping between accounts. Notice that writer's flow, repeated themes, and purpose.
- Mark what the passage reveals about Jesus—His identity, character, authority, compassion, mission, death, and resurrection.
- Compare parallel passages after understanding each account in its own context. Ask what each writer includes and emphasizes.
- Use a cross-reference Bible, Gospel harmony, map, or trusted study resource as a companion—not a substitute for reading the text.
- Let the Gospels lead beyond information to faith, worship, obedience, and discipleship (Matthew 7:24; John 20:31).

Where should I begin?

Mark — a clear, fast-moving starting point

Begin with Mark if you want a concise introduction to what Jesus did, what He taught, and why the cross stands at the center of His mission.

John — a close look at who Jesus is

Begin with John if you want to explore Jesus' identity, His relationship with the Father, and His invitation to believe and receive life in His name.

Matthew and Luke — the wider biblical story

Continue with Matthew to see rich Old Testament fulfillment and kingdom teaching. Read Luke for an orderly account that highlights God's saving grace reaching every kind of person.

Questions to carry into any Gospel

- What does this passage reveal about Jesus?
- What response does Jesus invite or command?
- How does this event move the story toward the cross and resurrection?
- What does the writer want readers to understand and believe?

Remember

The four Gospels do not give us four different Jesuses. They give us four Spirit-inspired witnesses to the one Lord Jesus Christ. Read each account carefully, receive its distinct contribution, and let the combined testimony deepen your confidence in Him.

See Jesus clearly. Trust His Word. Follow Him faithfully.

Suggested passages for continued study: Matthew 1:1–17; Mark 1:1–15; Luke 1:1–4; John 1:1–18; Luke 24:13–49; John 20:24–31; 1 Corinthians 15:1–8; 2 Peter 1:16–21.