

Survey of the New Testament The Gospels

The Gospels provide the account of the ministry, messages, and miracles of Jesus. They describe His birth, His life, His death, His resurrection, and His ascension.

It is not surprising that because each Gospel centers on the person of Jesus that they share stories and events that are similar:

- Statement of Jesus' deity near the beginning (Mt 1:23; Mk 1:1; Lk 1:32–35; Jn 1:1)
- John the Baptist's ministry (Mt 3:1–3; Mk 1:2–4; Lk 3:2–3; Jn 1:6–7)
- Jesus' baptism (Mt 3:13–17; Mk 1:9–11; Lk 3:21–22; Jn 1:29–34)
- Jesus' miracles and teachings (Mt 4–25; Mk 1–13; Lk 4–19:27; Jn 2–17)
- Jesus' betrayal, trial, and death (Mt 26–27; Mk 14–15; Lk 19:28–23:56; Jn 18–19)
- Discovery of Jesus' resurrection (Mt 28:1–15; Mk 16:1–8; Lk 24:1–12; Jn 20:1–10)
- Encouragement and commission for Jesus' disciples (Mt 28:16–20; Mk 16:9–20; Lk 24:13–53; Jn 20:11–21:23)

<http://overviewbible.com/four-gospels/>

Despite their similarities there are significant differences between each account. Differences in details, order of events, and the stories chosen for inclusion or omission are evident. Skeptics cite these differences as discrepancies and thereby denounce the credibility and reliability of the original texts.

There are two major considerations concerning why these differences exist.

1. Each Gospel account was written from a different perspective – While there most certainly was access to similar sources (both Matthew and Luke contain 90% of what Mark wrote), the differences suggest independent authorship.
2. Each Gospel account was written for a different purpose – The authors of the Gospels are not writing a chronological biography (with the exception of Luke). Each book has a specific audience, agenda, and argument that they are advancing.

<u>Gospel</u>	<u>Audience</u>	<u>Agenda</u>	<u>Emphasis</u>
Matthew	Jewish Christians	Christ the King	Teaching
Mark	Roman Christians	Christ the Servant	Actions
Luke	Gentile Christians	Christ the Man	Humanity
John	The World	Christ is God	Deity

III. The placard above the head of Jesus was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek

Matthew, Mark, and Luke have the most in common in terms of structure and material. Together these gospel accounts are called the **Synoptic Gospels** (“to see together”). John’s Gospel, however, chooses to focus on only eight miracles (signs) as the evidence that Jesus is the Savior of the world.

The Gospel of Mark

Mark is the shortest of the four gospels, and according to modern scholarship, the first of the gospels to be written. However, from the 4th to the 19th centuries it was considered to be an abridged version of Matthew. Over 600 of Mark’s 661 verses are found in Matthew (40% in Luke). Matthew and Luke combined contains over 90% of the material found in Mark.

There are two observations that give modern scholarship an edge in the discussion:

1. Mark is written in inferior Greek. Both Matthew and Luke write the same story but write in refined Greek indicating that the text has been cleaned up for the purpose of clearer communication.
2. Matthew and Luke contain birth narratives and expanded information of those events surrounding the resurrection. It would have been unusual for Mark to omit this information if he were using either of those gospels as a source.

If Mark was a source for Matthew and Luke then it would have been written around AD 62-64 prior to the destruction of the Temple (AD 70). This would have given time for the Gospel of Mark to be recognized by the early church and adapted by the other gospel writers.

Early church fathers ascribe authorship to Mark. While his name does not appear in the gospel accounts, it does appear ten times throughout the New Testament. Who was Mark?

- Mark lived in Jerusalem and his mother’s house was a meeting place for the early church (Acts 12:12). He is identified as John Mark (John is his Hebrew name; Mark is his Roman name).
- Mark accompanies Paul and his cousin Barnabas (Col 4:10) on their first missionary journey (Acts 12:25; 13:5) but abandoned the mission. He is the center of contention between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:36-41). Barnabas and Mark engage in missions on the island of Cyprus.

- Mark becomes a source of spiritual encouragement to Paul during his time of incarceration in Rome (2 Tim 4:11).
- Mark became the first Bishop of Alexandria and died a martyr's death by being dragged through the streets of Alexandria with a rope around his neck.

www.biblicalchronology.com/martyrs.htm

- Mark was called "my son" (1 Pet 5:13) by Peter, indicating that Peter may have led him to faith in Christ. He accompanied Peter (post-resurrection) and recorded his sermons. Peter was his primary source for his gospel.

Specific focus on Peter's deeds and words (8:29, 32-33; 9:5-6; 10:28-30; 14:29-31, 66-71; the phrase "and Peter" is unique to this gospel 16:7)

The primary audience for Mark's gospel were believers living in Rome who were beginning to face the persecution from Nero and who needed their faith to be encouraged and developed.

What are the indicators that Mark was writing to a Roman audience?

- Jewish customs are explained
- Latin terminology is employed
- Roman reckoning of time is used
- A Roman Centurion exclaims the deity of Jesus (15:39)

What are the unique characteristics of Mark in contrast to Matthew and Luke?

1. There is greater emphasis on the actions of Jesus more than the teachings of Jesus. There are eighteen miracles recorded and only four parables.
2. The description of events are vivid and couched in historical present tense. The action is from the viewpoint of an eyewitness and is fast paced (the word immediately or straightforward is used 41 times).

3. Thirty six percent (36%) of the narrative is devoted to the last eight days of the life of Jesus (11:1-16:8).

Key Verse:

*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. **Mark 10:45***