

Harmony Of The Gospels

Introduction To The Gospels

I. **Why Did The Gospels Need To Be Written?**

- A. The gospels are so called because they record the good news that a way of salvation has been opened through Christ.
- B. The rapid spread of the gospel precipitated the need for written accounts of the life of Christ.
- C. As major figures and eyewitnesses died, there was an increasing need for written accounts of what they had seen and heard.
- D. These gospels were used to evangelize, teach new converts, and were used in worship (Luke 1:1-4).

II. **Why Four Gospels?**

- A. Many other gospel accounts were written, but only four were accepted as being inspired.
- B. These spurious gospels add much that is obviously fanciful and legendary.
- C. These spurious gospels often try to bolster heretical or sectarian points of view.
- D. The gospels were written to the four general groups of people in the first century.

III. **The Synoptic Gospels**

- A. Definition.
 1. The term synoptic comes from two Greek words (*syn* and *optikos*) that mean "view together" or "a common point-of-view." Matthew, Mark and Luke are called "synoptic gospels" because they view the life and ministry of Jesus from a common perspective different from that of John, the writer of the fourth gospel.
 2. The first three gospels emphasize Jesus' teaching in short sayings and parables centering on the theme of the kingdom of God. John relates long speeches by Jesus, frequently mentions eternal life, and emphasizes Jesus' teaching about Himself. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are primarily concerned with focusing attention on events and teachings that were typical and important in the earthly life of Jesus. John's purpose is based upon a deeper study of God and he places more stress on the meaning and significance of Jesus and His work.
 3. The word gospel means "evangel" or "good news." In first-century Greek, "gospel" referred to a message from a king or a favorable report about a significant event. Various forms of the word were used by the Greek translators of the Old Testament (LXX) in such

- passages as Isaiah 40:9; 52:7; 61:1, which speak of a time of joy, peace, and salvation through the intervention of God. Jesus identified His own activities and teachings as "good news" (e.g., Matthew 11:5; Mark 1:14-15) and called men to make sacrifices for His sake and for that "of the good news" (Mark 8:35; 10:29). The later reports of the ministry of Jesus, in either oral or written form, were also called "the good news" (Mark 1:1; 13:10; 14:9; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4).
4. The application of the term "good news" to the written records of the ministry of Jesus by both the original authors and by early Christians is an important clue toward understanding them. This suggests that they are not intended to be biographies in the formal sense of the word, but proclamations of the person and events that comprise the good news that God has intervened in history in order to bring salvation to His people (cf. Luke 1:68).
- B. The common synoptic proclamation of Jesus.
1. Through either a brief title (Mark 1:1) or accounts of His miraculous birth (Matthew 1-2; Luke 1-2), Matthew, Mark, and Luke introduce Jesus of Nazareth as a unique person with a unique work to accomplish.
 2. They then proceed to proclaim the good news about Him by recounting events and teachings organized around the four periods of Jesus' public ministry.
 - a) The ministry of John the Baptist and the baptism and temptation of Jesus (Matthew 3:1-4:11; Mark 1:2-13; Luke 3:1-4:13).
 - b) The ministry in Galilee (Matthew 4:12-18:35; Mark 1:14-9:50; Luke 4:14-9:50).
 - c) The journey to and ministry in and around Judea (Matthew 19:1-20:34; Mark 10:1-52; Luke 9:51-19:27).
 - d) Jesus' final week, death, and resurrection (Matthew 21:1-28:20; Mark 11:1-16:20; Luke 19:28-24:53).
- C. Distinctive features of each synoptic gospel.
1. Although Matthew, Mark, and Luke present the ministry of Jesus within the same outline and generally from the same point of view, each gospel also contains distinctive features.
 2. Each has material not found in the others. The material within a particular synoptic gospel found in one or both of the others is sometimes placed in different settings or contains different wording.
 3. As a result, each gospel has its unique character and emphasis and presents the "good news" about Jesus in such a way as to make Him the most attractive to the audience each evangelist is addressing.

a) The gospel of Matthew.

- (1) Matthew properly introduces our four gospels. As none of the others, he links the New Testament with the Old Testament showing our Lord's fulfilling of the Hebrew scriptures.
- (2) The unique features of Matthew may be observed in material he alone records, in the structure of his composition, and in some of his distinct phraseology. His gospel opens with a genealogy and birth narrative of Jesus differing from that of Luke in emphasizing Jesus' kingly heritage and work. Matthew's resurrection account is briefer than Luke's and focuses on the appearance of the risen Christ to His disciples in Galilee rather than in Jerusalem (28:16-20).
- (3) Matthew was a skilled writer and gave his gospel structure, form, and rhythm. A dominant feature of Matthew's structure is five interspersed collections of sayings (5:1-7:29; 10:5-11:1; 13:1-53; 18:1-19:2; 24:1-25:46).
- (4) Each discussion begins by placing Jesus in a specific context and ends with a formula found nowhere else in the gospel and with a summary pointing forward and backward. These five discussions are very well-defined, meaning that it is almost certain that Matthew planned them. In this scheme, His birth functions as a prologue anticipating the opening of the gospel. Matthew 26-28 constitutes a sixth narrative section with the responsibility of the corresponding teaching section being given to the disciples (28:18-20).
- (5) In addition, on 33 occasions Matthew mentions "the kingdom of heaven," a phrase found neither in Mark nor in Luke. In 11 of these occurrences, parallel passages in one or both of the other two gospels read "kingdom of God." This latter phrase had political and military connotations in the first-century Jewish mind, and Matthew uses it only in contexts in which the spiritual character of that kingdom is evident.
- (6) Matthew further demonstrates an interest in Jewish interests and conditions by frequent quotations from the Old Testament that are intended to show various facets of Jesus' life as either fulfillments of Old Testament predictions or as re-statements of Old Testament themes. Matthew also displays more interest than the other two in matters related to Jewish law and customs and the relation between Israel and faith in Jesus.
- (7) When Matthew is read with these items in mind, it becomes obvious that it is addressed primarily to Jews. It is the gospel that seeks to convince Jews that Jesus is indeed their long-

awaited Messiah of David's line. Matthew suggests that in Jesus alone may Israel fulfill her God-given destiny and properly understand and observe God's will and law. Matthew also shows that the real people of God are the people of the Messiah, the church, whose numbers include all those who obey Christ.

b) The gospel of Mark.

- (1) Mark, the shortest of the gospels, relates that basic proclamation common to all Matthew and Luke (over 90% of the material in Mark is recorded in one or both of the other synoptics). Instead of specialized groupings or methodical sectioning, Mark purposely reveals an unstopping succession of astonishing deeds. Mark is the "camera man" of the four gospel writers, giving us shot after shot of unforgettable scenes. He uses a fast-moving style and the way he frequently strings together incidents with "straightway" and "immediately." Mark, though not neglecting the teachings of Jesus, is primarily concerned with relating His actions.
- (2) Mark's portrayal of Jesus often features extremes and dramatic incidents. He reports popular acclaim alongside bitter opposition and struggle, divine power and authority alongside human fatigue and sorrow. Mark gives special attention to Jesus' miracles of healing and to His conflict with the spiritual world as demonstrated in His casting out demons. The theme of the suffering of the Son of Man and reflections of the imagery and working of the Servant passages of Isaiah hold a conspicuous place. More clearly than the other gospels, Mark shows Jesus' opposition to abuses associated with certain Jewish institutions and practices of His day, such as the Sabbath (2:23-3:6), ceremonial laws concerning eating (2:15-17; 7:14-23), and the exclusive Jewish use of the temple (11:17).
- (3) At least five times Mark uses Aramaic phrases, but indicates that he is not writing for Jewish leaders by translating them (3:17; 5:41; 7:34; 14:36; 15:34). He gives Latin equivalents for terms and amounts (12:42; 15:16) and in so doing may provide a hint to the identity of his audience. This evidence, plus a notice of Mark's style, when combined with ancient traditions seems to confirm that this gospel was written to inform action-oriented Romans of Jesus, the Son of God (1:1), the Son of Man with authority to forgive sins (2:10), who came to serve and to suffer to redeem many (10:45).

- (4) There is no opening genealogy as in Matthew (it would have meant little to the Romans), and no introductory account of what preceded and attended the birth of Jesus. Right away we are at the Jordan, to hear John announce the coming of Christ.
 - (5) Jesus appears on the scene, and by eager, graphic strokes Mark reaches in chapter one what Matthew takes eight chapters to overtake. He covers in nine chapters what Matthew traverses in twice as many. His account is not skimpy; on the contrary, it is alive with detail. He focuses on what Jesus did, and omits much of what Jesus said.
 - (6) It is interesting to note the extra details and touches from Mark's pen which demonstrate his originality.
 - (a) He adds graphic perspective (1:13, 33; 2:1-2, 4; 4:36-40, 6:48, 53-56; 8:2-3, 14; 9:3, 36; 10:17, 32, 50; 11:4; 12:42; 15:29; 16:4). He also emphasizes by repetition (1:45; 4:8; 14:68).
 - (b) He pays close attention to small details such as names (3:17; 10:46; 15:21), times (1:35; 4:35; 11:19; 15:25), numbers (2:3; 5:13; 6:7; 14:30, 72), and locations (2:13; 11:4; 12:41; 15:39; 16:5).
 - (c) It is from Mark that we owe almost all the snapshots of our Lord's looks, gestures, and emotional reactions.
- c) The gospel of Luke.
- (1) The gospel according to Luke exhibits the highest literary quality of any of the records of the ministry of Jesus. It is the longest book of the New Testament and, together with its sequel, the book of Acts, comprises the largest block of material by a single New Testament author. In the first four verses Luke reveals his purpose -- to accurately inform the reader regarding the Christian faith. His methodology, he says, is to write an orderly (not necessarily chronological) account based on careful research conducted among credible witnesses.
 - (2) Luke uses the same general framework as Matthew and Mark but introduces a number of variations in details from the structure of the others. His description of the Galilean ministry is shorter and organized differently from those of the other gospels.
 - (3) In Matthew we have significant groupings. In Mark we have successive snapshots. In Luke we have a beautifully told story. In his prologue, Luke states that his own work was the result of the work of others (1:1), that he consulted eyewitness-

nesses (1:2), and that he arranged the information (1:3) under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to instruct Theophilus in the historical reliability of the faith (1:4). This is a carefully researched and documented writing.

- (4) Luke's birth narrative includes information about the birth of John the Baptist, contains numerous details regarding the birth and early life of Jesus not found elsewhere and features the visit of the shepherds to see the baby. Luke's gospel also contains the longer account of appearances of the resurrected Jesus to His disciples. Luke locates the above in Judea. It is, however, within the context of Jesus' journey to and ministry in and around Judea just prior to His death that Luke's content and structure is most distinct.
- (5) Matthew and Mark devote relatively little space to this final journey. Luke makes it a section in which special emphasis is placed on the teachings of Jesus. Some material that Matthew locates in the Galilean ministry is included by Luke in this travel section (e.g., the Lord's prayer, Luke 11:1-4; cf. Matthew 6:9-13). Here also he introduces some material that shows a particular interest in presenting Jesus as a friend of the the disadvantaged. Such accounts as Jesus' encounters with the publican Zacchaeus (19:1-10) and with Mary and Martha (10:38-42), the healing of a woman with an infirmity (13:10-17), and the parables of the good Samaritan (10:29-37), the prodigal son (15:11-32), the rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31), the unjust judge (18:1-8), and the Pharisee and the publican (18:9-14) are examples.
- (6) Luke, evidently a cultured Greek addressing a Gentile of social rank, seeks to proclaim Jesus by weaving together material that will give an impression of His personality and a sample of a broad spectrum of His teachings. He emphasizes Jesus' humanitarian concern for the needs of despised and suffering individuals. More than any other New Testament writer, Luke seeks to show the interest of Jesus in all people, including non-Jews and shows Jesus' relevance for everyone. However, these and other features illustrate distinctions in emphasis rather than any real differences from the other gospels in understanding the essential content of the nature and work of Jesus.
- (7) When we examined Mark we found ourselves diverted from literary divisions, and instead focusing on vivid scenes and rapid transitions which were intended to hold the reader's mind. Luke is clearly arranged into parts or movements.

- (8) The first section is the Lord's nativity narrative. It has no parallel in the other gospels. Mark and John tell nothing at all about our Lord's birth at Bethlehem. Matthew does, but he does not describe the levels of physical development as does Luke. Matthew's account is only a quarter the length of Luke's. The second section reports the Lord's work in Galilee, which is noticeably shorter than Matthew's or Mark's. The third section is the long chronicle of our Lord's journey to Jerusalem. In contrast with only two chapters in Matthew and one in Mark, it extends through no less than ten chapters in Luke, thereby forming the longest part of the gospel. The fourth and final part is comprised of Luke's recounting of the final tragedy and triumph in Jerusalem.
- (9) Though specifically dedicated to Theophilus (who apparently was a Gentile himself), the gospel is written for all Gentiles. Several lines of evidence point to this conclusion.
- (a) Luke frequently explained Jewish localities (4:31; 8:26; 21:37; 23:51; 24:13). This would be unnecessary if he were writing to Jews.
 - (b) He traced Jesus' genealogy (3:23-38) all the way back to Adam (rather than to Abraham, as in Matthew's gospel). The implication is that Jesus was representing all mankind rather than just the Jewish nation.
 - (c) Luke referred to Roman emperors in designating the dates of Jesus' birth (2:1) and of John the Baptist's preaching (3:1).
 - (d) Luke used a number of words which would be more familiar to Gentile readers than the comparable Jewish terms found in Matthew's gospel.
 - (e) Luke used the Septuagint when quoting from the Old Testament. He has relatively few direct quotations, though the book is filled with allusions (cf. 2:23-24; 3:4-6; 4:4, 8, 10-12, 18-19; 7:27; 10:27; 18:20; 19:46; 20:17, 28, 37, 42-43; 22:37).
 - (f) Little is said about Jesus' fulfilling prophecies because that theme was not nearly so important to Gentile readers as it was to Jewish readers. Luke has only five direct references to fulfillment of prophecy and all but one (3:4) are found in the teaching of Jesus to Israel.

D. The "synoptic problem".

1. Source criticism.

- a) Source criticism is the study of the use of written sources by the evangelists. It is the earliest form of criticism, and has been ap-

plied particularly to the relationship of the synoptic gospels to each other.

- b) Scholars believe that Matthew, Mark, and Luke contain a common core of material. This material is almost always presented in the same sequence and includes rare terms and grammatical constructions.
- c) Scholars say that Matthew and Luke share an additional core of material, designated as "Q". "Q" comes from the German word "Quelle" which means source, the first letter being used to designate the document. It is also called the "Logia" ("words" or "sayings") because of the supposition that it contained mainly the words of Jesus.
- d) Scholars note that substantial parts of Mark are reproduced or paralleled in Matthew (about 90%) and about half of Mark appears in Luke's gospel. Therefore, Matthew and Luke both appear to have used two sources: Mark and "Q." "Q" is the similar sections of Matthew and Luke which are not found in Mark.
- e) This theory essentially says that Matthew did not have enough intelligence as to be able to record facts in the life of Jesus which he saw and heard without copying from Mark who was not present.
- f) However, Luke deliberately declared that his document was based on first-hand interviews and eyewitnesses. He evidently never refers to the works of Matthew and Mark. Matthew was also an eyewitness. Other eyewitnesses abounded with whom Mark and Luke would be in immediate contact. What necessity would these writers have for written sources?
 - (1) If Luke copied from Mark and Matthew, why did he omit the thrilling scene when Jesus walked on the water, when he had just recorded, as did the others, the feeding of the 5,000?
 - (2) Moreover, there is strong evidence that Matthew wrote independently of Mark because Matthew omitted the healing of the one who had a speech impediment (Mark 7:31-37). Matthew and Luke are very different from Mark in the early sections. In the latter half of their narratives, they continually introduce new facts and sayings which the others do not record.
- g) Also, what would "oral tradition" know about the life of Christ that an inspired apostle did not know -- an apostle who was directly inspired as was Matthew to write his gospel? Everything that happened in the life of Christ could have been made known to the apostles and writers of the gospels by direct inspiration.

- h) Repeated declarations that the theory is true are supposed to supply the lack of proof. Thus is the effort made to transmute theory into fact by mere repetition of theory.
2. Form criticism.
- a) Form criticism was an escape from the responsibility of trying to prove the twofold basis for the two-source theory. A further problem is that the priority of Mark has never been proved.
 - (1) It has never been proved that the early Christian scholars were in error in affirming that Matthew wrote first, followed by Mark and then Luke, finally toward the close of the century in the reign of Domitian, John wrote his gospel. The theorists have never proved that Matthew copied from Mark.
 - (2) The fact of Matthew writing in Aramaic (from Papias) implies that Matthew's gospel was the first to be written. Matthew wrote while the Hebrew element was still strong in the early church.
 - b) Form critics assume that the gospels are composed of small independent units or episodes. These small single units were circulated independently. The critics teach that the units gradually took on the form of various types of folk literature, such as legends, tales, myths, and parables.
 - c) Form criticism operates on the principle that the materials of the written gospels can be divided into groups on the basis of differences in structure and form, and that these differences give us clues to the ways in which they developed in the pre-literary period.
 - d) This criticism proposes that the evangelists were not so much the writers as the editors of the four gospels. They took the small units and put them in an artificial framework to aid in preaching and teaching.
3. Redaction criticism.
- a) This theory states that different copyists and commentators of the early biblical writings embellished and altered the biblical texts throughout early Jewish and Christian history to make them appear more miraculous, inspirational, or legitimate.
 - b) The purpose of these editorial insertions is an attempt to make explicit what the editor saw as the underlying spiritual message. The editor thus saw himself as simply making plain what he may have considered to be unclear.
 - c) Redaction critics tend to find insertions and clarifications in most passages in the Bible. A very famous example of "editorial work," to the redaction critic, is found in Mark 16:9-20.

4. After all the effort, scholars are still unable to offer a rational explanation of the similarities and differences of the gospels. The entire range of human speculation concerning the historical documents is covered by the critics with the exception of the one proposition that these documents might be precisely what they claim to be -- faithful firsthand history of actual events recorded by eyewitnesses or by men who had access to the eyewitnesses.
5. All three of these theories have no proof to back up their claims. It is interesting to note that over 150 years ago, skeptics were directing their whole attack to the proposition that the gospel narratives contradict one another hopelessly. Now they have swung to the opposite extreme and argue that they are so much alike that the writers must have copied from one another or from common sources.

IV. ***The Gospel Of John***

- A. Since both the gospel of John and the three other gospels deal with narratives of the life of Jesus, the question of interrelationship naturally occurs. Matthew, Mark, and Luke distinctly resemble one another, not only in general subject and order of narrative but also in many instances of extended teaching. The text of John, on the other hand, differs radically in its form and content from the other gospels.
- B. The gospel of John is a narrative composed of various individual scenes from the work of Jesus; it is not a complete biography. The chronological gaps leave an impression of incompleteness for those expecting a complete chronicle of Jesus' work. Because the gospel has a specific purpose, it utilizes only the episodes that will best illustrate its presentation of Jesus as the object of faith.
- C. Matthew, Mark, and Luke revealed the seven peak events of Jesus: birth, baptism, temptation, transfiguration, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. They are a presentation of Jesus; John is an interpretation of Jesus, and therefore is markedly different. The first three show us Jesus outwardly; the fourth gospel interprets Him inwardly. The first three emphasize the human aspects; the fourth unveils the divine. The other three gospels are mainly occupied with His Galilean ministry; this one is almost completely devoted to His Judean ministry. The other three are purely factual, while John is also doctrinal. The other three begin with a human genealogy and a fulfillment of Jewish prophecy; John begins with a direct revelation of what was eternal. As a result, over 90% of the content of John does not occur in the other four gospels.
- D. This gospel was probably written at a time when the church was composed of second and third generation Christians who needed more detailed instruction about Jesus and new defenses for the apologetic

problems raised by apostasy within the church and growing opposition outside. The understanding of the person of Christ that had depended on the testimony of His contemporaries was becoming a problem. Doctrinal variations had begun to appear, and some of the assertions of the basic Christian truths had been challenged. A new presentation was necessary to meet the questions of the changing times (20:31). The gospel of John is, therefore, a deeper examination of God and in some respects more universal than Matthew, Mark, and Luke. While it is not necessarily less Jewish, it has a wider appeal to the growing church and to an enlarging Gentile population than the others.

- E. This gospel contains little information about general historical events. It does refer to the ministry of John the Baptist (1:19-37; 3:22-36; 4:1); Herod's rebuilding of the temple (2:20); the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas (18:13-14); and the person of Pontius Pilate (18:28-19:16, 38), prefect of Judea. The Roman domination of Palestine is implied and there is almost no direct allusion to current political affairs and no mention of the church by name. John seems to be concerned less with time than with eternity.
- F. With respect to its general order, the gospel of John parallels the others. On the other hand, John the Baptist's introduction of Jesus to His disciples is highlighted rather than His general preaching of repentance. Jesus' initial contact with the disciples is quite different from the calling of the first four disciples as reported elsewhere. The discourses of Jesus in John are mainly concerned with the nature of God rather than ethical and practical instructions, as in the sermon on the mount. Only seven miracles are recounted, and of these, only two duplicate those of Matthew, Mark and Luke (the feeding of the 5,000 and Jesus walking on the water). The chronological order is different in some places. The events of the last supper, the betrayal, the hearing before Pilate, and the crucifixion are reported quite differently from the other three gospels; and the resurrection account has only slight resemblance to Matthew, Mark, and Luke.
- G. John wrote as a first-hand witness making a special presentation of Jesus. John possessed knowledge of many facts of Jesus' life mentioned in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, but he also knew much they did not record. He utilized this material in a different way and shaped it for a different purpose.
- H. At the same time, there is a sense in which the fourth gospel complements the other three. It often seems to begin its narrative at a point where the others have stopped or to assume a knowledge they would supply. For example, in the account of the last supper John tells how the disciples reclined for the meal without the customary footwashing as they entered the room and how Jesus Himself felt obligated to sup-

ply the lack of service (John 13:2-14). Luke tells us how on that occasion the disciples were bickering with one another for the highest place in the coming kingdom (Luke 22:24). If their attitude toward one another was a rivalry for the best position in the coming kingdom of Jesus, it explains why no one was ready to wash the feet of the others.

- I. One marked feature of John's gospel is the partiality to personal interviews. Matthew, Mark, and Luke emphasize Jesus' public ministry as He talked to the crowds, though they do lay considerable emphasis on the training of the disciples. While John does on several occasions say that many believed in Him in response to His public actions or appeals (2:23; 4:39; 7:31; 8:30; 10:42; 11:45; 12:11, 42), it records fewer of His general discourses. The personal interviews are distributed through the earlier part of the gospel: Nicodemus in Jerusalem (3:1-15), the woman of Samaria (4:1-26), the nobleman of Cana (4:43-53), the paralytic in Jerusalem (5:1-15), the blind man (9:1-38) and Mary and Martha in Bethany (11:17-40). These interviews represent different classes of society, occur at different times during Jesus' career, and have different occasions followed by varying appeals. All of them, however, whether implicitly or explicitly, illustrate the nature and consequences of belief. All of the interviews depict Jesus' personal concern for people.
- J. The general interviews with groups are similar in content and teaching. In time and place they approximately parallel the individual interviews. "Many" listened to Him in Jerusalem (2:23); "many of the Samaritans" received Him willingly after His conversation with the woman (4:39); a crowd gathered to hear Him in Capernaum after the feeding of the 5,000 (6:24-40; cf. 12:12, 17, 29-36). Likewise, John gives a great deal of attention to Jesus' personal ministry to the disciples: Andrew (1:40; 6:8), Peter (1:42; 6:68; et al.), Philip (1:43-44; 6:5; et al.), Nathanael (1:47-51; 21:2), Thomas (11:16; 14:5; 20:26-29) and Judas Iscariot (12:4-8; 13:26-30).
- K. John also records discussions with hostile persons. At least six conflicts with "the Jews" are mentioned (2:18-20; 5:16-47; 6:41-59; 7:15-44; 8:31-58; 10:22-39). The title "the Jews" apparently is not given only for the purpose of distinguishing their nationality from Samaritans or Gentiles but to identify Jesus' opponents (i.e., the Jewish leadership; cf. 7:13; 9:22; 20:19). Each of these instances indicates the progress of unbelief that leads to the climax of the cross. The interview with Pilate is the only instance of a hostile individual confrontation in this gospel, and Pilate's hostility is due more to his political dilemma than to personal hatred.

- L. The chronological framework of the gospel is loose.
 - 1. The segment from 1:19 to 2:11 represents the consecutive events of a few days, which are marked well by the phrase "the next day" (1:29, 35, 43), or some related expression. The major divisions of action following the initial miracle in chapter 2 are indicated by the occurrences of feasts (2:13; 5:1; 6:4; 7:2, 14; 10:22; 12:1).
 - 2. Furthermore, reconciling John with Matthew, Mark, and Luke can be difficult. Between Matthew 4:11-12, Mark 1:13-14, and Luke 4:13-14 is the first five chapters of John. Between John 5-6, most of the Galilee circuit, which takes up considerable space in the Synoptists, should be inserted. Finally, there is a gap of several months between John 10:21-22. At this point, He returned to Galilee and then finally left as per Matthew 19:1 and Mark 10:1. He went no further than Perea and Judea, and His next visit to Jerusalem was for the entry into the city during His final week.

V. **Authorship And Date**

A. Authorship.

- 1. Matthew, who was surnamed Levi (Mark 2:14), was a Jewish tax collector for the Roman government (Matthew 9:9). Because he collaborated with the Romans, who were hated by the Jews as overlords of their country, Matthew was despised by fellow Jews. Nevertheless, he responded to Christ's call to follow Him. After the account of the banquet he gave for his colleagues so they too could meet Jesus, he is not mentioned again except in the list of the apostles (Matthew 10:3; Acts 1:13). Tradition says that he preached in Palestine for a dozen years after the resurrection of Christ and then went to other lands.
- 2. John Mark was the son of Mary, a woman of wealth and position in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12). Barnabas was his cousin (Colossians 4:10). Mark was a close friend (and possibly a convert) of the apostle Peter (1 Peter 5:13). It is thought that he was at the arrest of Jesus (Mark 14:51-52). He had the rare privilege of accompanying Paul and Barnabas on the first preaching trip but failed to stay with them through the entire trip. Because of this, Paul refused to take him on the second trip, so he went with Barnabas to Cyprus (Acts 15:38-40). About a dozen years later he was again with Paul (Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24), and just before Paul's execution he was sent for by the apostle (2 Timothy 4:11).
- 3. Luke, the "beloved physician" (Colossians 4:14), close friend and companion of Paul (cp. Acts 16:10; 20:6; 27:1-"we" sections), was probably the only Gentile author of any part of the New Testament. We know nothing about his early life or conversion except that he

was not an eyewitness of the life of Jesus (Luke 1:2). Though a physician by profession, he was primarily an evangelist, writing this gospel and the book of Acts and accompanying Paul in his preaching work. He was with Paul at the time of his death (2 Timothy 4:11), but of his later life we have no certain information.

4. The writer of the fourth gospel is identified in the book only as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (21:20, 24). He obviously was a Palestinian Jew (John 1:44, 46; 5:2; 7:37-39; 18:28) who was an eyewitness of the events of Christ's life (John 2:6; 13:26; 21:8, 11). Eliminating the other disciples that belonged to the "inner circle," one concludes that John was the author. John the apostle was the son of Zebedee and Salome and was the younger brother of James. He was a Galilean who apparently came from a fairly well-to-do home (Mark 15:40-41) and was known as a "son of thunder" (Mark 3:17). He played a leading role in the work of the early church in Jerusalem (Acts 3:1; 8:14; Galatians 2:9). Later he went to Ephesus and for an unknown reason was exiled to Patmos (Revelation 1:9).

B. Date.

1. A careful reading of Matthew, Mark, and Luke suggests they were written well before the fall of Jerusalem. For example, Matthew records more warnings against Sadducees than all other New Testament writers combined; but after A.D. 70 the Sadducees no longer existed as a center of authority. This argues for a pre-70 date for this book. Most scholars believe he wrote his gospel first, perhaps in the 50s. Mark says nothing at all of the Jewish War (A.D. 66-70), which was climaxed by the destruction of Jerusalem. Evidence within the gospel seems to support a date for the gospel after Peter's death in A.D. 64. Since the conclusion of Acts shows Paul in Rome, and since the gospel of Luke was written before Acts (Acts 1:1), Luke's gospel was probably written about A.D. 60, possibly in Caesarea during Paul's two-year imprisonment (Acts 24:27).
2. John was probably completed by A.D. 90. A date before the end of the first century is likely since the discovery of the John Rylands fragment shows that the gospel was being copied in Egypt by 125-150. A date after the temple's destruction in 70 is also likely. Earlier there were various Jewish groups in Palestine -- Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots, Herodians -- but after 70 the Pharisees became dominant and other groups faded. The way John alternately refers to "the Pharisees" and "the Jews" suggests that he wrote when other groups were no longer a factor. References to formal procedures for putting Christians out of the synagogue (9:22) and the contrasts between Jesus' followers and the Jews (vs. 28) are

made in ways that suggest that Christians were no longer considered a Jewish sect but were a distinct group, which was true later in the century.

VI. **Conclusion**

- A. As we conclude our study of the gospels and glance back retrospectively, Matthew shows that the promised One is here (credentials). Mark reveals how He worked (power). Luke demonstrates what He was like (nature). John shows who He really was (Godhead).
- B. After seeing this fourfold picture, how we ought to prize Him, love Him, extol Him, teach for Him, and long for that day when we will see Him (1 John 3:2).