

Bible Survey, part 3 – The New Testament (The Gospels & The Acts of the Apostles)

OVERVIEW OF THE BIBLE

- **WHAT** each book is about
- **WHEN** each one was written
- **HOW** they are all interconnected

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“Gospel” = “Good News”

The Gospels **begin** with Jesus’ birth and **end** with His resurrection.

Four Gospels = Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

Not four sets of “good news” but the **same** “good news” from **four different perspectives**.

The **last** of the four Gospel writers to die was John [95 A.D.] – so all four Gospels were **written before the end of the first century A.D.**

The Gospel According to Matthew

- Written by Matthew
- Matthew = one of the original twelve disciples

“And as Jesus came from Capernaum, He saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the tax collector’s booth; and He said to him, ‘Follow Me!’ and Matthew got up immediately and followed Jesus.” Matthew 9:9

“Among the four Gospels, I have learned by tradition that the first one was written by Matthew . . . It was directed at the converts from Judaism, and published in the Hebrew [Aramaic] language.”

Origen (240 A.D.)

“Matthew compiled the sayings of Jesus in the Aramaic language, and everyone translated this as well as he could.” Papias (130 A.D.)

Comments of the early Church Fathers:

1. Matthew’s Gospel was the first Gospel written
2. It was originally written in Aramaic and later translated into Greek as in the New Testament today
3. It was **designed especially** for Jewish people

“Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled, saying . . .” Matthew 2:17

“In order that what was spoken by Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying . . .” Matthew 12:17

More than any other Gospel, Matthew constantly uses this phrase: “In order that it might be fulfilled which was written [in the Old Testament] . . .”

His purpose was to help Jewish people understand that (1) **Jesus really is the Messiah** because (2) **He fulfilled** everything about the Messiah that the Old Testament predicted.

Generally I suggest that a seeker start with the Gospel of John – **unless they are Jewish** – in which case I suggest they begin with the **Gospel of Matthew**.

The Gospel According to Mark

- Written by John Mark
- This is the same John Mark who deserted Paul and Barnabas in the middle of their “first missionary journey” (Acts 13:13)
- Shortest of the four Gospels

Tradition holds that Mark wrote his Gospel account at the dictation of the Apostle Peter – just before Peter’s death in Rome in 66 A.D.

The Gospel According to Luke

- Written by “Luke, the beloved physician . . .” (Colossians 4:14)
- Met Paul on his “second missionary journey” in Troas (Acts 16)
- Accompanied Paul the rest of Paul’s life

Luke’s Gospel was the result of an **intensive investigation** that Luke conducted regarding the **evidence** about Jesus Christ.

“Many have undertaken to compile an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us – things that were handed down from those who were eyewitnesses of the **Word**.” Luke 1:1-2

“In the beginning was the **Word** – and the **Word** was with God and the **Word** was God . . . And the **Word** became flesh and dwelt among us.” John 1:1, 14a

“So I did a **careful investigation** of everything from the beginning – and have written an **orderly account** of all these things for you, O Theophilus, so that you may be fully assured about the certainty of the things you have been taught [about Christ].” Luke 1:3-4

Luke did a “Senate investigation” into the events surrounding Jesus’ life and ministry – to **make sure** that none of it was a hoax!

Luke’s Gospel was written between 50-60 A.D. – because it clearly **predates** the Book of Acts (also written by Luke) **which ends in 62 A.D.** with Paul in Rome.

The Gospel According to John

- Written by “John, the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 21:7)
- Written around 90 A.D.
- Last of the four Gospels to be written

John’s Gospel contains many unique details that only someone who was with Jesus everywhere, everyday would know.

“Now there were six water jars made of stone there . . . each holding 20-30 gallons.” John 2:6

“Peter pulled the net to shore and it was full of large fish, 153 to be exact . . .” John 21:11

“So Peter and the disciple Jesus loved [John] were running to the tomb; both were running, but the other disciple [John] ran faster than Peter and got to the tomb first!” John 20:3-4

The oldest copies we have of **ALL FOUR GOSPELS** together come from the 4th Century A.D.

Codex Vaticanus (325 A.D.)



Codex Sinaiticus (335 A.D.)



The oldest **evidence** we have of **ANY** Gospel is the “**Rylands Papyrus P52**”

- Fragment from John chapter 18
- Dated 125 A.D.
- Approximately 30 years after the Gospel was written

Rylands Library Papyrus P52

31 εἶπεν οὖν αὐτοῖς ὁ Πιλάτος· λάβετε αὐτὸν ὑμεῖς καὶ κατὰ τὸν νόμον ὑμῶν κρίνατε αὐτόν· εἶπον αὐτῷ οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι· ἡμῖν οὐκ ἐξέστιν ἀποκτεῖναι οὐδέν·

32 ἵνα ὁ λόγος τοῦ Ἰησοῦ πληρωθῇ ὃν εἶπεν σημαίνων ποίῳ θανάτῳ ἤμελλον ἀποθνήσκειν.

33 Εἰσῆλθεν οὖν πάλιν εἰς τὸ πραιτώριον ὁ Πιλάτος καὶ ἐφώνησεν τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· σὺ εἰ ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων

Then Pilate said to them: Take him yourself and judge him according to your law. **The Jews** answered him: We are not permitted to execute **anyone**. **So that the** word of Jesus would be fulfilled, which he **said indicating** by which death he **would die**. So the Pilate **entered** his palace and called Jesus **and said** to him: Are you the king of the **Jews**?

A photograph of a fragment of the Rylands Papyrus P52. The fragment is a small, irregular piece of papyrus with Greek text written in a cursive script. The text is partially obscured by a large, dark, irregular stain or hole in the center of the fragment.

The Book of Acts

- The actual title in the Greek New Testament = “**The Acts of the Apostles**”
- Written by Luke
- Companion book to his Gospel

Luke is the **only non-Jewish person** to write any of the Bible.

“In my former book [Gospel], O Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and teach until He was taken up into heaven, having given orders to the Apostles whom He had chosen.” Acts 1:1-2

In the rest of The Book of the Acts – Luke **tells us how** the Apostles **carried out these orders** of Jesus.

“Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every person.” Mark 16:15

“Go and make disciples of all nations . . .” Matthew 28:19

“Preach repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem.” Luke 24:47

The Book of Acts **BEGINS** with the ascension of Jesus back into heaven after His resurrection in 33 A.D.
The Book of Acts **ENDS** with Paul in jail in Rome in 62 A.D.

Section #1 (chapters 1-12) memorializes the actions of the Apostles before Paul’s missionary journeys begin.

Section #2 (chapters 13-28) memorializes the impact of Paul’s four missionary journeys on the world up to his first incarceration in Rome in 62 A.D.

According to church historian Eusebius, Paul was **released** from this first incarceration.

“After defending himself, Paul was again sent on the ministry of preaching, till he was put in jail a second time in Rome, suffering martyrdom under Nero [66 A.D.].” Eusebius

So What?

Based on how The Book of Acts can be split into two sections – it is fair to say that the **Apostle Paul’s coming to faith** in Jesus Christ was one of the “**seminal events**” not just **in the Bible**, but **in world history**!

Paul was a “**one-man wrecking machine**” when it came to the early Christians!

In Acts 9, Paul was on his way to Damascus to **ravage** the Christians there – when the Risen Christ appeared to him and he gave his life to Christ.

“And **immediately**, Paul began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues of Damascus saying, ‘He **IS** the Son of God.’” Acts 9:20

“And all of those who heard him were **astonished**, and said, ‘Isn’t this the man who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on Jesus’ name and who came here to take such people in chains back to the priests in Jerusalem?’” Acts 9:21

“But Paul kept increasing in [spiritual] strength, confounding the Jewish people in Damascus by proving to them that Jesus **IS** the Messiah.” Acts 9:22

“So the disciples in Damascus took Paul by night and lowered him over the wall in a basket. And when Paul came to Jerusalem . . . he was moving around freely, speaking out **boldly** for the Lord.”

Acts 9:25-26a, 28

George Duffield wrote: Stand up, stand up for Jesus . . .

This is exactly what we see Paul doing from “**day one**” of his salvation: **standing up for Christ!**

“**Standing up for Christ**” = when God opens a door for us to “**own His cause and speak His name**” – we do it!

You and I as followers of Christ are not called to protect ourselves – we are **called** to “**stand up, stand up for Jesus**”!

“Imitate me as I imitate Christ.” 1 Corinthians 11:1

“For I am not ashamed of the Gospel . . .” Romans 1:16