



9:00 Live Sunday School at FBJ

Why Four Gospels?

I. This study comes from Dr. J. Vernon McGee at Thru The Bible (www.ttb.org)

II. Why Four Gospels?

A. Four different perspectives:

1. Religious people
2. Strong, action-oriented people
3. Analytical/thinking people
4. The once-lost who have believed

B. Why Four and not Seven? In OT “four” represents the Earth or mankind

- Four corners of the Earth
- Four sides of the New Jerusalem
- 4×3 – Earth x Trinity = 12 (Apostles/Tribes)
- DON'T let this guide you – it's a pattern

III. Religious people – Book of Matthew

A. There is a difference in “religion” and “faith”

- Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin and a Pharisee
- John 3:4: “How can a man be born when he is old?”
- The scribe/lawyer from Luke 10: What shall I do to inherit eternal life?

B. Jesus' harshest words were to the religious establishment of the day

1. Matthew 23:13: “*But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in.*” (ESV)

2. What is a ὑποκριτής? *hypokritēs*

- Means an actor – Greeks used masks
- Used in the NT 20 times – only in Synoptics - 15 times used by Matthew

C. God only gave one religion and it was to the Jews in order to worship and praise Him - It's the only book in the NT written in Hebrew - "OT is the Messiah concealed; the NT is the Messiah revealed"

D. The Jews need to see prophesy fulfilled and Matthew gives four examples in Matthew 2:

1. vv.1-6: He'll be born in Bethlehem – Micah 5

2. vv.13-15: He'll be called out of Egypt

- Hosea 11:1: *When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.*

3. vv.16-18: Weeping in Ramah

- v.16 "and in all that region"

- v.18 is Jeremiah 31:15

4. v.23 - "spoken by the prophets" – note the others are from a particular singular prophet

- No OT prophet says "He shalt come from Nazareth"

- Nazareth/Nazarene in Greek comes from Hebrew word "branch"

- Zechariah, Daniel, Isaiah all refer to the Branch in some form

- Isaiah 11:1: *There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.* (ESV)

IV. Strong, Action-Oriented People – Book of Mark

A. Much like the Roman Empire – Ruled for 1,000 years - Daniel's statue representing the iron legs is Rome

- Like Peter, who was likely the source for John-Mark, it was action - Remember Mark was NOT an apostle

- No birth story

- No chronology or genealogy

- Mark 10:45: *For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many*

B. Mark 1:10: "immediately" - "at once" - "straightaway" - Greek word is *eutheos* and its an adverb (escribing the verb) - In the NT 80 times – 40 are in Mark

C. Mark 1:21-35 - Mark's Jesus was Action-Oriented – In one day:

- Goes to Capernaum

- Teaches in Synagogue

- Casts evil spirits

- Heals Peter's mother-in-law

- Healed many in the evening

- Got up early next morning to pray

V. Luke's Jesus caused people to think

A. As the only Gentile NT writer, Luke was influenced by Greek philosophy – “pondering”
- Plato, Aristotle, Socrates and Jesus were all great teachers – only One was a Savior

B. Two-fold purpose of Luke's gospel:

1. Historical accuracy

- Note this historical accuracy of Jesus' birth: In the days of Caesar Augustus when Quirinius was governor of Syria, etc.
- Dr. Luke has done his homework

a. Luke 1:1-4 - Two words to point out:

(1) “eyewitnesses” – *autoptai* – two Greek words put together:

(a) *autos* – self/same – like automatic

(b) *optanomai* – its where we get the word optometrist

- v.11 – Gabriel “optanomai” (appeared) to Zechariah to tell of John the Baptist's birth

(2) “ministers” of the word – *hyperetes* - Not the same word for deacons or pastors

- Like *autoptai*, also two Greek words that mean “under rower” – like a boat

2. Presenting the perfect, divine Son of God – Luke 2:52

- Greeks were looking for the perfect man: art, plays, statues, architecture, philosophy, temples to gods, etc.

- Luke 24:44-47 - v.47 – all nations – *ethnos*

C. Greek Search for Wisdom

1. Septuagint – Greek translation of the Old Testament - Seventy scholars (6 from each tribe) to translate and come up with the right interpretations

Dr. McGee: “The religion of Israel could produce only a Pharisee, the power of Rome could produce only a caesar, and the philosophy of Greece could produce only a global giant that was a baby at heart.”

VI. John's Jesus is for the Once-Lost

A. Last of the Gospels written – Likely 100 AD - The church had been established and a wider Gentile audience was included

B. John 1:35-42: v.36 – Rabbi; v.41 – Messiah; v.42 -Cephas

C. The Greek-minded Lukan readers couldn't deal with “In the beginning was the Word...”

- John's Gospel isn't scientific – it's the heart not the head

D. The discourse from the Upper Room is roughly ¼ of the Gospel of John – It’s for “Believers Only”

- Vine and the Branches
- Holy Spirit
- Don’t let your heart be troubled
- “I am the Way, the Truth and Life”

E. John gives us more on the Resurrected Christ that other three Gospels combines – Guess how many instances?

1. Mary Magdalene
2. 10 of 12 Apostles (Minus Judas Iscariot and Thomas)
3. Apostle appearance Number 2 (with Thomas)
4. On the shore of the Sea of Galilee
5. He cooked breakfast
6. He commissions Peter
7. He speaks of John not being martyred

VII. Have we seen these four before? Ezekiel 1:4-14

A. Matthew’s religious people needed a King of Judah – the Lion of Judah - Genesis 49:8-10

B. Mark’s strong and self-assured people need action – strong as an ox - 1st Corinthians 9:7-11

C. Luke’s mankind-centered thinkers need to analyze/digest/be taught

- Proverbs 9:9: *Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning.* (ESV)

D. John’s wretched man needs to believe in something higher and bigger than himself – It soars like an eagle

- Psalm 103:1-5

E. The gospel is a revealing – a Revelation

Revelation 4:6-8: “...and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal. And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!” (ESV)

Lesson Thought: God “meets us where we are at”

Questions? Comments? Thoughts? nick@nickwalters.org