

A Harmony of the Gospels by Chronology and Topics

# GOSPELS

## SIDE BY SIDE

LUKE



MATTHEW

MARK



JOHN

ROSE  
PUBLISHING

# Why Do We Need Four Gospels?

Because the four Gospels contain different accounts of the same or similar events in the life of Jesus, readers of the Gospels have often sought to compare and contrast these accounts by placing them next to each other. These side-by-side comparisons attempt to harmonize the work of the four Evangelists and so are often called “Gospel Harmonies.”

## FOUR POINTS OF VIEW

Gospel	Symbol	Viewpoint	Audience	Jesus the Son of God
Matthew	Lion	Palestinian Jewish	Jewish world	Is the Messiah King of Israel
Mark	Bull	Hellenistic Jewish	Greek-speaking world	Is the Power of God in the world
Luke	Man	Greco-Roman	Gentile world	Is the Ideal Man of God
John	Eagle	Heavenly	Whole world	Is the Word of God

Why are there four Gospels instead of just one? One answer is that it takes four points of view to get the whole story about Jesus. Some might argue that one authoritative story should be enough. However, God chose to reveal himself using four Gospels. The Gospel of John begins with these words: “In the beginning was the Word ... (vs. 1) and the Word became flesh ... (vs. 14). In other words, God chooses as his preferred method of communication to speak to humans by means of the human. This is true of the Bible and it is supremely true of Christ whom we are told is God in the flesh (John 1:14–18). So then, the Gospels are, like Jesus, both a Divine work as well as a human work. They have real human authors and one divine Author. They give details that might be difficult to understand, but they are never truly contradictory. They have four different points of view on the history of Jesus but only one Divine conclusion as to his identity as the Son of God.

# Harmony of the Gospels

EVENT	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
The genealogy of Jesus	1:1-17		3:23-38	
Jesus' birth and childhood	1:18-2:23		1:5-2:52	
John the Baptist's ministry	3:1-12	1:1-8	3:1-18	1:19-34
Christ's public ministry and first Passover	3:13-4:12	1:9-14	3:21-4:13	1:35-4:42
Christ's ministry in Galilee	4:12	1:14-15	4:14-15	4:43-54
His rejection at Nazareth and move to Capernaum	4:13-22; 8:14-17	1:16-34	4:16-41	
His first ministry tour and second Passover	4:23-12:14	1:35-3:6	4:42-7:50	5:1-47
His second ministry tour	12:15-13:58	3:7-6:6	8:1-56	
His third ministry tour	9:35-11:1; 14:1-12	6:6-29	9:1-9	
Ministry to his disciples and third Passover	14:13-18:35	6:30-9:50	9:10-56	6:1-71
Ministry in Judea			10:1-13:21	7:1-10:39
Ministry beyond Jordan	19:1-20:34	10:1-52	15:22-19:27	10:40-11:54
The last week (Passover/Easter)	21:12-28:20	11:1-16:20	19:28-24:53	11:55-21:25
Arrival in Bethany and Mary anoints Jesus' feet	26:6-13	14:3-9	19:28	11:55-12:11
Triumphal entry	21:1-11	11:1-11	19:29-44	12:12-19
Second cleansing of the temple; barren fig tree cursed	21:12-13; 18-22	11:12-18	19:45-48	
Greeks seek Jesus; fig tree withered	21:19-22	11:19-25	21:37-38	12:20-50
Jesus' authority challenged	21:23-22:46	11:27-12:37	20:1-44	
Denouncing the scribes and Pharisees	23:1-39	12:38-40	20:45-47	
Widow's offering		12:41-44	21:1-4	
The Olivet discourse	24:1-25:46	13:1-37	21:5-36	
Crucifixion predicted	26:1-5	14:1-2	22:1-2	
Judas's bargain	26:14-16	14:10-11	22:3-6	
Preparation and the Passover	26:17-30	14:12-26	22:7-20	13:1-14:31
Discourse and high priestly prayer				15:1-17:26
Gethsemane	26:36-46	14:32-42	22:39-46	18:1
Betrayal, arrest, and trial	26:47-56	14:43-52	22:47-53	18:2-14

EVENT	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Jesus condemned to death and Peter's denial	26:57-75	14:53-72	22:54-65	18:15-27
Formal condemnation after dawn	27:1-2	15:1	22:66-71	
Judas' suicide	27:3-10			
Jesus' first time before Pilate	27:11-14	15:1-5	23:1-5	18:28-38
Jesus before Herod the Tetrarch			23:6-12	18:39-19:16
Jesus' second time before Pilate	27:15-26	15:6-15	23:13-25	
Soldiers mock Jesus	27:27-31	15:16-23	23:26-33	19:16-17
The crucifixion	27:32-49	15:21-36	23:26-43	19:18-29
Jesus' death	27:50-56	15:37-41	23:44-49	19:30-37
Jesus' burial	27:57-66	15:42-47	23:50-56	19:38-42
Earthquake and tomb opened	28:1-4			
Visit of women at dawn	28:5-8	16:1-3	24:1-8	20:1
Women report to the apostles; Peter and John visit the tomb			24:9-12	20:2-10
Jesus appears first to Mary Magdalene		16:9-11		20:11-18
Jesus appears to other women; the guards report to the rulers	28:9-15			
Jesus appears to two on the road to Emmaus		16:12-13	24:13-32	
Jesus appears to Peter			24:33-35	
Jesus appears to ten, Thomas absent		16:14	24:36-43	20:19-25
Jesus appears to the eleven, Thomas present				20:26-31
Jesus appears to seven on the sea of Galilee				21:1-25
Jesus appears to about five hundred at an appointed mountain in Galilee	28:16-20	16:15-18		
Jesus appears to his brother James—1 Corinthians 15:7				
Jesus appears to his apostles again, his ascension		16:19-20	24:44-53	
Jesus appears to Paul—1 Corinthians 15:8				

## Galilee and Judea

Jesus began his public ministry in Galilee, in the northern region. He spent much, if not most of his time there. Jesus frequented Judea and Jerusalem for the required religious festivals, but it seems he only spent significant time there late in his ministry (Luke 9:51). John affirms that his safety was compromised in Judea, and that it was only under cover that Jesus made his way to Jerusalem (John 7:1–10).



Yet, even this seeming insignificant fact about Christ's life was foretold in Scripture. Matthew 4:12–17 shows us that Isaiah had prophesied hundreds of years in advance that Christ's brilliant light would shine forth in Galilee (Isaiah 9:1–2).

## Jesus' Last Week

The Gospel writers center much of their attention on the last week of Jesus' ministry. The previous chart reveals that about a fourth to a half of the Gospel's material has to do with the incidents surrounding Christ's death and resurrection. This should tell us of the importance of this week in their minds. It holds the key to the central issue of the church and of all history, for in that last week, the life and death of the whole world and the whole of human history were at stake. Without the death and resurrection of Jesus there is no hope, nor can there be any salvation.

# Miracles of Jesus

The Gospel of John records the least number of miracles. Most of John's miracle accounts are not in the other Gospels. John seems to have intentionally included new



material that had not previously been written down. At the same time John's focus is more on Jesus' words, his teaching, rather than on the miraculous signs Jesus did. Perhaps conscious of his readers' desire for miracle stories, John adds to his Gospel the words, "I suppose that even the world would not have room for the books that would be written" about Jesus' many other deeds (John 21:25).

MIRACLE	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Water into wine				2:1-11
Official's son healed				4:46-54
Healing of demoniac in the synagogue		1:21-28	4:33-37	
Healing of Peter's mother-in-law	8:14-17	1:29-31	4:38-39	
Many healed at sunset		1:32-34	4:40-41	
Miraculous catch of fish			5:4-11	
Healing of a leper	8:2-4	1:40-45	5:12-16	
Healing of a paralytic	9:2-8	2:1-12	5:17-26	
Healing at Bethesda				5:2-15
Withered hand healed in a synagogue	12:9-14	3:1-6	6:6-11	
Many healed	12:15-21	3:7-12	6:17-19	
Centurion's servant healed	8:5-13		7:1-10	
Widow's son raised at Nain			7:11-17	
Demon-possessed man healed	12:22-23	3:20-21		
Calming of the storm	8:23-27	4:36-41	8:23-25	
Demonic legion cast out	8:28-34	5:1-20	8:26-39	
Healing of the woman with the flow of blood	9:20-22	5:24-34	8:42-48	
Raising of Jairus' daughter	9:23-26	5:35-43	8:49-56	
Healing of two blind men	9:27-31			
Healing of a mute demoniac	9:32-34			
Many healed, feeding of five thousand	14:13-21	6:30-44	9:10-17	6:1-14
Walking on water and calming of the storm	14:22-33	6:45-52		6:16-21
Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter healed	15:21-28	7:24-30		
Deaf mute healed		7:31-37		
Many healed, feeding of four thousand	15:29-39	8:1-10		
Blind man of Bethsaida healed		8:22-26		
Healing of demoniac boy	17:14-19	9:14-29	9:37-43	
Healing of the man born blind				9:1-7
Crippled woman healed on Sabbath			13:10-13	
Healing of a man with dropsy on the Sabbath			14:2-6	
Jesus raised Lazarus				11:38-44
Ten lepers cleansed			17:11-14	
Healing of two blind men near Jericho	20:29-34	10:46-52	18:35-43	
Many healed in the temple	21:14			
Healing of the severed ear			22:51	
Resurrection	28:1-20	16:1-19	24:1-53	20:1-31
Miraculous catch of fish				21:1-8

## Harmonies Through History

Over the years, people have created different types of “Gospel Harmonies.” These are some of the main types of harmonies:

- **Synthetic Harmonization:** One approach is to cut out any variation in similar accounts and replace it with preferred wording to create a kind of “official version.”
- **Sequential Harmonization:** This type attempts to bring together two or more versions of an event by keeping both. The separate details are seen as separate incidents within the same story.
- **Parallel Harmonization:** A final approach may be to show two or more versions next to each other for comparison and contrast.

Gospel harmonies began to be produced early in the history of the church. Concern for accuracy and a full account of the gospel message became important for the church as it strove to remain faithful. These early harmonies bear witness to the church’s use of the four canonical Gospels. Already by the post-apostolic age, the authority of the four to the exclusion of other texts is recognized.

AUTHOR	TITLE	DATE
Justin Martyr	Evident in his writings	Second Century
Tatian	Diatesseron	Second Century
Unknown	Dura-Europas Harmony	Second Century
Eusebius of Caesarea	Sections and Canons	Third Century
Augustine	Consensus of the Gospels	Fourth Century
Andreas Osiander	Gospel Harmony	Sixteenth Century

# The Gospels as Biography

The four Gospels are best understood as biographies about the life and times of Jesus. However, there are important differences between modern and ancient biographies. The main difference is the notion of *historical sequencing*.

MODERN BIOGRAPHIES	ANCIENT BIOGRAPHIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Biographies written today place a premium on sequencing.</li><li>• The events of the subject's life are typically narrated in the order in which they happened.</li><li>• Beginning with the birth of the individual, relevant events and information are viewed in sequential order up to the death of the subject.</li><li>• While chapters may present different phases in the subject's life, these phases are arranged in the order in which they are supposed to have happened.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ancient biographers had a general commitment to an historical sequence.</li><li>• They did not feel the need to place every detail in their writings in the exact order in which it happened.</li><li>• Much more emphasis is given to developing an accurate picture of the character of the subject. Deeds and happenings are seen as illustrative of that character no matter when they occurred.</li></ul>

## THE GOSPELS AS BIOGRAPHIES

- Luke 7:36–50 is an example of the non-sequential nature of ancient biographies.
- This passage is Luke's account of the woman who anoints Jesus' feet.
- Matthew, Mark and John tell this event as part of Jesus' arrival at Bethany just before the events of Easter week (see Harmony Chart).
- Despite Luke's care as an accurate historian (Luke 1:1–4), he places this event much earlier in Jesus' ministry—that is, if we read Luke like we would read a modern biography.
- Some have tried to resolve the difficulty by suggesting that there were two such events, two times when various women anointed Jesus' feet. But the details of Luke's account too closely resemble the other Gospel accounts to make it a separate incident.
- It is much more likely that Luke (and so the Holy Spirit) was simply using this event out of historical sequence to illustrate the Pharisees and their lack of faith in contrast to the faith of the centurion (Luke 7:2–10).





# The Parables of Jesus

PARABLE	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
The Bridegroom, Cloth and Wineskins	9:10-17	2:15-22	5:29-39	
The Sower	13:3-23	4:3-20	8:5-15	
The Lamp	5:15-16	4:21-25	8:16-18; 11:33	
The Seed Growing		4:26-29		
The Weeds	13:24-30; 36-43			
The Mustard Seed	13:31-32	4:30-32	13:18-19	
The Leaven	13:33-35		13:20-21	
The Hidden Treasure	13:44			
The Pearl of Great Price	13:45-46			
The Net	13:47-50			
The Householder	13:51-53			
On Defilement	15:1-20	7:1-23		
The Narrow Door	7:13-14		13:22-30	
The Unmerciful Servant	18:23-35			
The Good Samaritan			10:29-37	
The Friend at Midnight			11:5-10	
The Rich Fool			12:16-21	
The Waiting Servants			12:35-38	
The Watchful Householder	24:42-44		12:39-40	
The Wise Steward and the Wicked Steward	24:45-51		12:41-48	
The Fig Tree 1			13:6-9	
The Guests			14:7-11	
The Banquet			14:12-24	
The Lost Sheep	18:10-14		15:1-7	
The Lost Coin			15:8-10	
The Lost Son			15:11-32	
The Unrighteous Steward			16:1-13	
The Rich Man and Lazarus			16:19-31	
The Returning Servant			17:7-10	
The Unjust Judge and the Widow			18:1-8	
The Pharisee and Publican			18:9-14	
The Laborers in the Vineyard	20:1-16			
The Fig Tree 2	21:18-22	11:12-24		
The Ten Minas			19:11-27	
The Two Sons	21:28-32			
The Tenants	21:33-46	12:1-12	20:9-18	
The Wedding Banquet	22:1-14			
The Fig Tree 3	24:32-35	13:28-31	21:29-33	
The Ten Virgins	25:1-13			
The Talents	25:14-30			
The Sheep and the Goats	25:31-46			

# Tracking Jesus' Moves

The use of this kind of harmony is also helpful to get a picture of Jesus' movements.

PLACE	EVENT OR TEACHING	SCRIPTURE
Bethlehem	Birth of Jesus	Mt. 1:24-25; Lk. 2:1-7
Egypt	Flight from Herod	Mt. 2:13-15
Nazareth	Early childhood	Mt. 2:19-23; Lk. 2:39
Jerusalem	Passover celebration	Lk. 2:41-52
Jordan River	Baptism of Jesus	Mt. 3:13-17; Mk. 1:9-11; Lk. 3:21-23; Jn. 1:29-34
Wilderness	Temptation of Jesus	Mt. 4:1-11; Mk. 1:12-13; Lk. 4:1-13
Going to Galilee	Calling of Philip and Nathaniel	Jn. 1:43-51
Cana in Galilee	First miracle	Jn. 2:1-11
Capernaum	Family stay	Jn. 2:12
Jerusalem	First Passover	Jn. 2:13-25
Judea	Baptizing new disciples	Jn. 3:22
Returning to Galilee	Jesus goes through Samaria	Jn. 4:1-4
Samaria	Jesus talks to the women at the well	Jn. 4:5-42
Cana in Galilee	Healing of official's son and the beginning of Jesus' Galilean ministry	Jn. 4:43-54; Mt. 4:12; Mk. 1:14-15; Lk. 4:14-15
Nazareth	Rejection at Nazareth	Lk. 4:16-30
Capernaum	Move of ministry base	Mt. 4:13; Mk. 1:21; Lk. 4:31
Galilee	Preaching tour	Mt. 4:23-25; Mk. 1:32-39; Lk. 4:42-44
Jerusalem	Second Passover	Jn. 5:1-47
Galilee	The parable of the Sower and Seed	Mt. 13:1; Mk. 4:1; Lk. 8:1-4
Gennesaret	Healing of multitudes	Mt. 14:34-36; Mk. 6:53-56
Tyre and Sidon	Faith of the Canaanite woman	Mt. 15:21-28; Mk. 7:24-30
The Region of the Decapolis	Healing of deaf and dumb man, feeding of the 4000	Mt. 15:29-38; Mk. 7:31-8:9
Galilee	Teaching and healing	Mt. 15:39-16:5; Mk. 8:10-26
Caesarea Philippi	The question of Jesus' identity	Mt. 16:13-20; Mk. 8:27-30; Lk. 9:18-21
Galilee and Capernaum	Jesus tells of his death a second time, the half-shekel tax	Mk. 17:22-27; Mk. 9:30-50
Jerusalem	Feast of Tabernacles	Lk. 9:51; Jn. 7:2-10
Various places in Judea	Preaching tour	Lk. 10:1-24
Jerusalem	Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah)	Jn. 10:22-23
Across the Jordan	Preaching tour	Mt. 19:1; Mk. 10:1; Lk. 13:22; Jn. 10:40-42
Between Galilee and Samaria	Ten lepers healed	Lk. 17:11-19
Jericho	Jesus heals blind men	Mt. 20:29-34; Mk. 10:46-52
Bethany	The raising of Lazarus	Jn. 11:1-53
Ephraim	Jesus stays with his disciples	Jn. 11:54
Bethany, Jerusalem and places in the vicinity	Jesus' last week (Passover/Easter)	Mt. 26:6-28:15; Mk. 14:3-16:11; Lk. 19:28-24:49; Jn. 11:55-20:31
Galilee	Appears to his disciples	Mt. 28:16-20; Mk. 16:15-18; Jn. 21:1-23
Mount of Olives	Jesus' ascension	Mk. 16:19-20; Lk. 24:50-53

# Israel During Jesus' Time

Jesus' three-year ministry occurred all over the ancient cities. From Syria to Judea, Jesus brought the gospel's powerful words and actions.



# Jesus' Passovers

One way to measure the length of Jesus' public ministry is by counting the number of Passovers the Gospels record. Since the Passover festival only happened once a year, counting the Passovers gives a rough idea of how long Jesus' ministry lasted. The Gospels suggest that Jesus' public ministry continued for at least three years. Notice, John is the writer most concerned to give us the details about the festivals in Jesus' life.



FEAST	EVENT OR TEACHING	SCRIPTURE
<b>First Passover</b>	Jesus went to the Passover. He cleansed the temple, talked with Nicodemus and ministered in Judea for a while.	John 2:13–25
<b>Second Passover</b>	Jesus went to the “feast” (probably Passover) and healed the man at the pool of Bethesda.	John 5:1–47
<b>Third Passover</b>	Jesus delivered his “Bread of Life” teaching. However, he did not go to Passover because of a threat to his life in Judea.	John 6:4–7:1
<b>Tabernacles (Booths)</b>	Jesus went secretly for reasons of security. Teaching in the temple, he encountered opposition from the religious leaders. Jesus claimed to be the “Light of the World.” He healed the man born blind near the pool of Siloam.	John 7:2–9:41
<b>Hanukkah (Dedication)</b>	Jesus attended the feast. He spoke of his “sheep.” Again he escaped stoning.	John 10:22–42
<b>Last Passover/ Last Supper</b>	Jesus went to the Passover and the last week of his life took place.	Matthew 26:17; Mark 14:12; Luke 22:7; John 12:1

## The Synoptic Gospels and John

The word “synoptic” means “seen together.” It refers to the first three Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke. When seen together, these Gospels often reveal related accounts in very similar language. Scholars agree there is some relationship between these three books. The exact nature of this relationship has been the subject of much debate. It seems that these three authors either read one another or some common source, which explains why so much of their substance and language are the same.

The Gospel of John, however, is different than the first three Gospels. John uses material that the other writers do not have. The wording of some of the stories is different. John often added details that the others do not include. For example, the name of the woman who washed Jesus’ feet with her hair (John 12:3) or that he beat Peter in a foot race to the empty tomb on Easter Sunday (John 20:4). Many of these details have a personal tone.



Papyrus 1, also known as P<sup>1</sup>, shows a fragment of the Gospel of Matthew. The fragment, housed in the University of Pennsylvania Museum, dates to around AD 250.

## The Synoptic Gospels Compared to John Three Examples

THE GOSPEL TEXT	EVENT	DESCRIPTION
Matthew 3:11–12 Mark 1:7–8 Luke 3:15–18	John the Baptist's introduction of Jesus	General and generic language is used about the crowds.
John 1:24–44		John names specific individuals who become disciples of Jesus through John the Baptist.
Matthew 14:13–21 Mark 6:30–44 Luke 9:10–17	Feeding of the 5000	Dialogue with Jesus is attributed to the disciples as a group.
John 6:1–14		John names specific individuals who speak.
Matthew 28:1–10 Mark 16:1–11 Luke 24:1–12 John 20:1–18	The Resurrection	Individuals are named in all accounts to a greater or lesser extent.  John is specific about the actions of Mary Magdalene, Peter and himself (the unnamed disciple).

## The First Gospel

Because the first three Gospels so closely resemble each other, the question has long been asked, "Who wrote first?" Many modern scholars are inclined in favor of Mark as being the first Gospel in print. This is due in part to the brevity of the work and the fact that most of Mark's material can also be found in Matthew and Luke. The idea is that if Mark wrote first, Luke and Matthew might have read his work and added their own material in their writing. Early tradition holds that Mark became associated with Peter and that his Gospel might be a kind of "Memoirs of Peter." Its rapid-fire style seems like Peter's way of recounting Jesus' life.

Others are convinced, however, that none of the Gospels that exists today was the first to be in print. These scholars believe that there was an earlier writing that the authors of the present Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) drew upon as a reference work. Papias, an early Christian and disciple of the Apostle John, wrote, "Matthew put together the sayings in the Hebrew language, and each one interpreted them as best he could" (in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.16). Since Matthew, was a tax collector (Matthew 9:9), he was a good pick to be the scribe among the disciples. So this tradition may bear some weight. It may be that Matthew recorded much of what happened in Jesus' ministry in the native tongue of Palestine. This document may later have been translated into Greek and used by him and the other synoptic writers to produce our present Gospels.

The Gospels as we now have them were first written in Greek, which was the popular common language of the Roman world. It is entirely possible that Matthew made the first record in Aramaic, but that Mark drafted the first Gospel in Greek drawing on Matthew's record and adding what he had heard from Peter. Luke and Matthew (in present form) would then have been written. John wrote his account after the others had been in circulation for some time.



Medieval manuscript known as *Aachen Gospels*, folio 13r, made around an 820.