

Introduction:

1. There was an accident a few days ago at an intersection near here. There were four witnesses.
 - a. Witness #1 is a doctor. He reports on the injuries sustained in the accident.
 - b. Witness #2 is an insurance agent. He reports on who was liable for the accident.
 - c. Witness #3 is a policeman. He reports on the legal and safety issues related to the accident.
 - d. Witness #4 is an auto repairman. He reports on the damage done to the vehicles.
2. Each witness had a different purpose in giving their report. Each give details that are consistent with their respective purposes. They do not contradict one another; rather, they complement. By putting all four accounts together, you have a fuller and more complete picture of the accident.
3. People often ask, “Why are there four gospels? Wouldn’t it have been simpler to have only one?” This illustration helps us understand why there are four. They are written for different purposes.
4. We might further ask, “Why are there any gospels at all? Why not just a statement of facts about Jesus? Why not just a catalogue of His teachings or a list of pertinent facts about His life? What about a simple list of promises and punishments? Why are there four stories about Jesus?”

The Lesson:**I. Why are there four gospels?**

- A. On the surface, it might seem easier, better and simpler if we had only one instead of four. Why not just “Matthew,” instead of “Matthew, Mark, Luke and John”?
- B. While none of the authors tell us why there are four, we can draw conclusions from the contents of the books. The contents of the four books are different, though they are never contradictory. They complement one another. If we had only one of the four, we would know a lot about Jesus, but our information would be incomplete.
- C. The basic idea is that the four gospels all tell us the same story, but from four different viewpoints and to four different audiences. Remember the illustration about the accident (above).
 1. The gospel writers all tell us the same basic story about the life of Jesus.
 2. However, while one writer might address the birth of Jesus, another might dwell on the nature and character of our Lord. Putting all four gospel accounts together gives us a fuller and richer portrait of the life and work of Jesus the Messiah.
- D. Two of the authors tell us why they wrote their books. The other two, though they do not give us a “why,” we can glean a “why” from the contents of the books. We can conclude that there are four gospels because they are written for different purposes and to different audiences.

II. The contents and purposes of the four gospels.

- A. Matthew presents “Jesus: the Jewish Messiah.”
 1. Matthew appeals to a Jewish audience. Matthew begins with Jesus’ genealogy, Matthew 1:1ff. This was essential to the Jewish mind. He must be of the lineage of Abraham.

2. Equally essential to Jewish thought is that the Messiah must fulfill the words of the prophets. Matthew quotes more than 40 Jewish prophecies. Examples: Matthew 1:22-23; 2:5.
 3. The Jews anticipated a Messiah King. It is natural that a book be dedicated to that.
- B. Mark presents “Jesus: Man of Action.”
1. This gospel appeals to the Gentiles, particularly to a Roman audience.
 2. Mark gives no genealogy, as it would not be of much value to Gentiles.
 3. Mark has to explain Jewish customs, unfamiliar to Gentiles, Example: Mark 7:13-14.
 4. From early in the book, Jesus is seen as a powerful miracle worker, Mark 1:31, 42.
 5. A key word found in Mark is “immediately,” emphasizing the powerful and immediate consequences of Jesus’ actions. Additionally, Mark closes his book with a reminder that the gospel message was confirmed by miracles as it went beyond the Jews, Mark 16:20. Gentiles who witnessed these miracles could testify to the truth of this statement.
 6. Since the gospel was to go far beyond the Jews it is natural that one of the gospels be dedicated to those beyond Judaism.
- C. Luke presents “Jesus: Son of Man.”
1. This account appeals broadly to all mankind as it focuses on the humanity of Jesus.
 2. Luke tells us his purpose for writing, Luke 1:1-4. We must be certain of our faith!
 3. The Gentile historian, Luke, references historical figures that are identifiable in history outside the Bible, Luke 3:1-2. This further affirms the certainty of Luke’s account.
 4. Like Matthew, Luke gives Jesus’ genealogy, except that he goes way back to Adam, emphasizing the humanity of Jesus, His connection with the human race (Luke 3:23-38). He is pictured as the Master Teacher of all men as He seeks the salvation of all, Luke 19:10.
 5. Luke stresses Jesus’ dependence on God, just as all men must depend on God. It is fitting that a book be written by a Gentile, as they would be the greater part of God’s people.
- D. John presents “Jesus: Son of God.”
1. This contrasts with Luke’s picture of Jesus’ humanity.
 2. Like Luke, John states the purpose of his book, John 20:30-31.
 3. John pictures Jesus as the Divine Creator and Lamb of God, John 1:1-3, 14, 29.
 4. John appeals to Jesus’ miracles as proof of His claims, John 20:30-31.
- E. Each gospel presents a unique perspective of Jesus—four different observers, yet each giving us harmonious information that completes the picture God wants us to have of His Son.

Conclusion:

1. Jesus’ many facets — His heart, words, life, and mission — are all necessary to appreciating His true nature. We must see Jesus as the Messianic King (Matthew), the perfect Man of action (Mark), the Master Teacher (Luke), and God in the flesh (John). Let’s honor Him for His every facet.
2. But the story is incomplete. There is an element that must be added to the story—you! The great question of the gospel is about whether or not you will become part of the story by following Jesus.