

WEEK 4: INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR GOSPELS

HIGH SCHOOL

GOALS

What is a gospel?
Who wrote the gospels?
What is the purpose of each of the four gospels?

LESSON

Materials Needed: Orthodox Study Bible, whiteboard, dry erase markers

Extended Learning Opportunity: “Crash Course on the Gospels - Conclusion” by Dr. Jeannie Constantinou (This is a summary of 8 podcasts, all worth listening to!)

https://www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/searchthescriptureslive/crash_course_on_the_gospels_conclusion

THE 4 GOSPELS:

What is a gospel?

The word **gospel** in Greek is **evangelion**. It means “good news or message.” The New Testament contains four gospels. These gospels tell us about the life, teachings, and miracles of Jesus Christ, as well as, the message of salvation for each and every one of us.

The gospels are the written record of Christ’s life provided by the apostles.

The first three gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) are different from the last gospel (John). The first three gospels are called the **Synoptic** (*taking a common view*) gospels because they all are similar to one another. In these three gospels, we learn about the life and teachings of Christ, as well as, He is the Messiah and Son of God. In the fourth gospel (John), we learn who Jesus is and why He came. St. John doesn’t feel it’s necessary to tell his version of the life of Christ. Instead, he writes his gospel to support the other three gospels. He leaves out known stories and chooses to explain things theologically to us instead. The four gospels point to Christ from different perspectives. This provides us with a fuller view of Christ’s life, teachings, and miracles.

Who wrote the gospels?

We just learned that the word gospel in Greek is evangelion. An **evangelist** is someone who brings the good news to others. Saints Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are evangelists. When you look at an icon of each of these saints, you will usually find them either holding a gospel book or actively writing (the gospel).

The four evangelists all have a slightly different emphasis for their gospels, but each gospel supports one another. Think about this - if each one of us went home today and told our family about what we learned in class, everyone's version would be slightly different. Your version of what happened in class will be influenced by who you're telling (your parents or siblings), what you knew before today, what you found interesting, and what you found most important to share. The same holds true when we read the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Additionally, by reading and having all four gospels, we are provided with a fuller picture of Jesus rather than if we only had one gospel.

What is an audience?

Have you ever heard the phrase, "Know your audience?" Here, we are referring to the people each evangelist (Matthew, Mark, Luke or John) are addressing with their gospel.

GOSPEL OF MATTHEW:

Saint Matthew was one of the twelve disciples of Christ. A disciple is student. In this case, the twelve disciples were men who left everything - their job, their home - and followed Jesus. We will be reading about the disciples all throughout the gospels. St. Matthew's gospel is highly structured and organized. It has a beginning and ending about Christ's life - The Nativity and then the Passion and Resurrection. In the middle of the gospel are alternating stories about Jesus and teachings by Jesus. It is also the longest of the four gospels.

AUDIENCE: Jews

THE PURPOSE OF HIS GOSPEL WAS TO TEACH PEOPLE: Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God; Jesus is the new Moses (the new teacher)

Saint Matthew - along with Mark, Luke, and John - wrote his gospel out of necessity. He knew that he would not live forever and he needed to write down what he had been teaching orally to the people around him, which we know today as the Gospel of Matthew.

How does Matthew prove that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and the new Moses?

He emphasizes that Jesus fulfilled (*carried out, brought to realization, completed*) the prophecies given to us by the prophets in the Old Testament. Matthew uses the word, “fulfill” many times in his gospel as he explains to everyone that Jesus is the Messiah that all the Jews had been awaiting.

GOSPEL OF MARK:

Saint Mark was one of the seventy apostles. He was a companion (*co-worker, a person who is frequently in the company of*) of St. Peter. He used the teachings of St. Peter as the foundation for his gospel. This gospel has less teachings of Jesus and more stories of Jesus’ life. It is filled with action and the shortest of the the four gospels.

AUDIENCE: Gentiles

This is a general term for anyone who was not a Jew.

THE PURPOSE OF HIS GOSPEL WAS TO TEACH PEOPLE: Jesus is the Son of God

Since Saint Mark did not have the need to teach the Gentiles that Jesus was the Messiah - because they were not Jews and therefore were not waiting for the Messiah - he focused on Jesus being the Son of God in this gospel.

How does Mark prove that Jesus is the Son of God?

He emphasizes Jesus’ miracles because these are acts of power.

GOSPEL OF LUKE:

Saint Luke was as a companion (*co-worker; a person who is frequently in the company of*) of Saint Paul. He is also known as Saint Luke the Physician. He is the only one of the evangelists to write a sequel to his gospel, the Acts of the Apostles. Saint Luke writes both his gospel and Acts in a historical manner by providing in-depth details and background.

AUDIENCE: Gentiles

This is a general term for anyone who was not a Jew. Luke is the only evangelist to write to a specific person - Theophilus. This gospel was copied and shared with others, which is a common practice during this time.

PURPOSE: Jesus is the Savior of the world, especially for those who think no one cares about them

How does Luke prove that Jesus is the Savior of the world?

He emphasizes Christ's love for the outcasts, poor, sinners, sick, widows, etc.

GOSPEL OF JOHN:

Saint John is the youngest of the twelve disciples and the only one of the disciples who remained with Christ at his crucifixion. Before Christ died on the Cross, he asked Saint John to take care of his mother, the Theotokos. (John 19:27) He is also known as Saint John the Beloved and Saint John the Theologian (*"to talk about God"*). He was the last to write his gospel and wrote the Book of Revelation as well.

AUDIENCE: Hellenistic Jews

Jews who spoke Greek

PURPOSE: To confirm the truth of the other three gospels; Christ is Divine; Christ is the 2nd Person of the Holy Trinity

How does John prove that Jesus is the Son of God?

He emphasizes Jesus' divinity and our sharing in the eternal life with Him

REVIEW -

Using the whiteboard, make four columns - one for each of the evangelists and label with their name. (See below.)

Review the main points of today's lesson with your students.

Questions:

- What does "gospel" mean?
- What does evangelist mean and who are the four evangelists?
- Who wrote the longest gospel? Who wrote the shortest one?
- Who wrote for the Gentiles? Who wrote for the Jews? Who wrote for the Hellenistic Jews?
- What was the intended purpose or main points of each of the four gospels?
- How did each of the four gospels emphasize the intended purpose of their gospel?

MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Longest Gospel	Shortest Gospel		
Audience: Jews	Audience: Gentiles	Audience: Gentiles	Audience: Hellenistic Jews
Purpose: Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, & the new Moses	Purpose: Jesus is the Son of God	Purpose: Jesus is the Savior of the world	Purpose: to confirm the truth of the other 3 gospels; Christ is Divine
Emphasis: Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecies in the OT & Jesus' teachings	Emphasis: Jesus' miracles	Emphasis: Christ's love for outcasts	Emphasis: Theological
Nickname by Bible Scholars: Meticulous Matthew	Nickname by Bible Scholars: The Storyteller	Nickname by Bible Scholars: The Historian	Nickname by Bible Scholars: The Theologian

*The intended purpose of providing the nicknames given to the evangelists by Bible scholars is for use as a memory tool to remember the differences between the four gospels. It is, by no means, a necessary point to the lesson.

WEEK 4: INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR GOSPELS

MIDDLE SCHOOL

GOALS

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AUDIENCE: Jews

THE PURPOSE OF HIS GOSPEL WAS TO TEACH PEOPLE: Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God; Jesus is the new Moses (the new teacher)

Saint Matthew - along with Mark, Luke, and John - wrote his gospel out of necessity. He knew that he would not live forever and he needed to write down what he had been teaching orally to the people around him, which we know today as the Gospel of Matthew.

How does Matthew prove that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and the new Moses?

He emphasizes that Jesus fulfilled (*carried out, brought to realization, completed*) the prophecies given to us by the prophets in the Old Testament. Matthew uses the word, “fulfill” many times in his gospel as he explains to everyone that Jesus is the Messiah that all the Jews had been awaiting.

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Since Saint Mark did not have the need to teach the Gentiles that Jesus was the Messiah - because they were not Jews and therefore were not waiting for the Messiah - he focused on Jesus being the Son of God in this gospel.

How does Mark prove that Jesus is the Son of God?

He emphasizes Jesus’ miracles because these are acts of power.

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This is a general term for anyone who was not a Jew. Luke is the only evangelist to write to a specific person - Theophilus. This gospel was copied and shared with others, which is a common practice during this time.

PURPOSE: Jesus is the Savior of the world, especially for those who think no one cares about them

How does Luke prove that Jesus is the Savior of the world?

He emphasizes Christ's love for the outcasts, poor, sinners, sick, widows, etc.

GOSPEL OF JOHN:

Saint John is the youngest of the twelve disciples and the only one of the disciples who remained with Christ at his crucifixion. Before Christ died on the Cross, he asked Saint John to take care of his mother, the Theotokos. (John 19:27) He is also known as Saint John the Beloved and Saint John the Theologian (*"to talk about God"*). He was the last to write his gospel and wrote the Book of Revelation as well.

AUDIENCE: Hellenistic Jews

Jews who spoke Greek

PURPOSE: To confirm the truth of the other three gospels; Christ is Divine; Christ is the 2nd Person of the Holy Trinity

How does John prove that Jesus is the Son of God?

He emphasizes Jesus' divinity and our sharing in the eternal life with Him

REVIEW -

Using the whiteboard, make four columns - one for each of the evangelists and label with their name. (See below.)

Review the main points of today's lesson with your students.

Questions:

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Emphasis: Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecies in the OT & Jesus' teachings	Emphasis: Jesus' miracles	Emphasis: Christ's love for outcasts	Emphasis: Theological
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WEEK 4: INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR GOSPELS

3RD - 4TH GRADE

GOALS

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Who wrote the gospels?
What is the purpose of each of the four gospels?

LESSON

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THE 4 GOSPELS:

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The first three gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) are all similar to one another because they tell us stories about Jesus’ life and what He taught the people while He was here. They are the **Synoptic** Gospels. St. John’s Gospel is a little bit different because he wants to help explain the other three gospels instead of write his own version of the stories they’ve already told.

Who wrote the gospels?

We just learned that the word gospel in Greek is evangelion. An **evangelist** is someone who brings the good news to others. Saints Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are evangelists. When you look at an icon of each of these saints, you will usually find them

either holding a gospel book or actively writing (the gospel). (*See handouts included with this lesson. You can also hang up the handouts in your classroom for later reference and review.*)

GOSPEL OF MATTHEW:

Saint Matthew was one of the twelve disciples of Christ. A disciple is student. His gospel is the longest of the four gospels.

SAINT MATTHEW WROTE HIS GOSPEL FOR: Jews

Jewish Christians are Jews who believe that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God. The Messiah is the promised and expected deliverer of the Jewish people.

THE PURPOSE OF HIS GOSPEL WAS TO TEACH PEOPLE: Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God; Jesus is the new Moses (*the new teacher*)

How does Matthew prove that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and the new Moses?

He emphasizes that Jesus fulfilled (*carried out, brought to realization, completed*) the prophecies given to us by the prophets in the Old Testament. Matthew uses the word, “fulfill” many times in his gospel as he explains to everyone that Jesus is the Messiah that all the Jews had been awaiting.

For example: (*Read to the children and have them follow along in their own Bible*)

- Matthew 1:22-23

GOSPEL OF MARK:

Saint Mark was one of the seventy apostles. He was a companion (*co-worker, a person who is frequently in the company of*) of St. Peter. He used the teachings of St. Peter as a guide for his gospel. His gospel is the shortest of the four gospels.

SAINT MARK WROTE HIS GOSPEL FOR: Gentiles

This is a general term for anyone who was not a Jew.

THE PURPOSE OF HIS GOSPEL WAS TO TEACH PEOPLE: Jesus is the Son of God

How does Mark prove that Jesus is the Son of God?

He emphasizes Jesus' miracles because these are acts of power.

For example:

- Mark 5:21-43

GOSPEL OF LUKE:

St. Luke was as a companion (*co-worker; a person who is frequently in the company of*) of St. Paul. He is also known as St. Luke the Physician. He is the only one of the evangelists to write a sequel to his gospel, the Acts of the Apostles, which is historical in presentation as well.

AUDIENCE: Gentiles

This is a general term for anyone who was not a Jew. Luke is the only evangelist to write to a specific person - Theophilus. This gospel was copied and shared with others, which is a common practice during this time.

PURPOSE: Jesus is the Savior of the world, especially for those who think no one cares about them

How does Luke prove that Jesus is the Savior of the world?

He emphasizes Christ's love for the outcasts, poor, sinners, sick, widows, etc.

For example:

- Luke 5:27-32 (Jesus invites Matthew, a Sinner)

GOSPEL OF JOHN:

Saint John is the youngest of the twelve disciples and the only one of the disciples who remained with Christ at his crucifixion. Before Christ died on the Cross, he asked Saint John to take care of his mother, the Theotokos. (John 19:27) He is also known as Saint John the Beloved and Saint John the Theologian (“to talk about God”). He was the last to write his gospel and wrote the Book of Revelation as well.

AUDIENCE: Hellenistic Jews

Jews who speak Greek

PURPOSE: To confirm the truth of the other three gospels; Christ is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity

How does John prove that Jesus is the Son of God?

He emphasizes Jesus’ divinity and our sharing in the eternal life with Him

For example:

- John 1:18

REVIEW -

Using the whiteboard, make four columns - one for each of the evangelists and label with their name. (See below.)

Review the main points of today’s lesson with your students. Ask the students questions and write their answers in the correct column on the whiteboard.

Questions:

- What does gospel mean? (*Good news or message*)
- What does evangelist mean and who are the four evangelists? (*Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*)
- When you’re looking at an icon of one of the evangelists, what do they usually have in their hand? (*A book or scroll*) Why are they holding this? (*To remind us that they wrote a gospel about Jesus*)
- Who wrote the longest gospel? Who wrote the shortest gospel?

ST. MATTHEW THE EVANGELIST



"Saint Matthew" by Lawrence OP is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Saint Matthew wrote the **Gospel** of Matthew. His gospel is the longest of the four gospels.

He was a **disciple** (*follower or student*) of Jesus, an **apostle** (*someone who is "sent out" to spread the news of Jesus Christ*) and an **evangelist** (*someone who brought the gospel to others*).

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the **Synoptic Gospels**. This means that these three gospels are similar to one another.

ST. MARK THE EVANGELIST



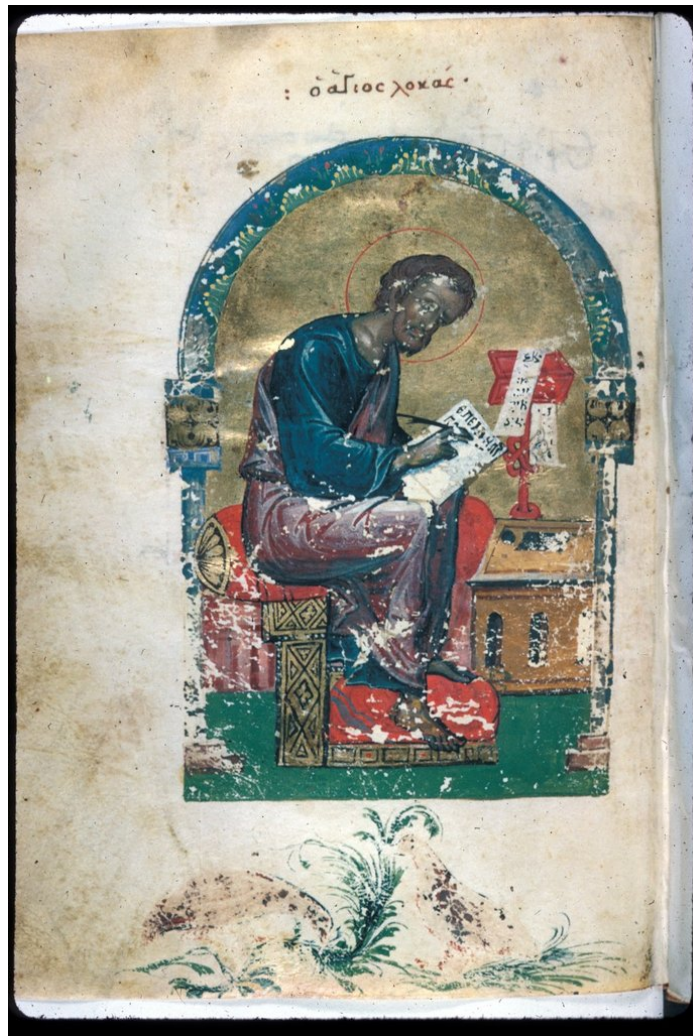
"St Mark the Evangelist" by Lawrence OP is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/)

Saint Mark wrote the **Gospel** of Mark. His gospel is the shortest of the four gospels.

He was a companion of Saint Peter and learned from him. Saint Mark was an **evangelist** (*someone who brought the gospel of Jesus Christ to others*) and one of the **70 apostles** (*Luke 10:1–24*).

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the **Synoptic Gospels**. This means that these three gospels are similar to one another.

ST. LUKE THE EVANGELIST



Public Domain - British Library

Saint Luke wrote the **Gospel** of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles.

He was a companion of Saint Paul and an **evangelist** (*someone who brought the gospel of Jesus Christ to others*) and he was one of the **70 apostles** (*Luke 10:1–24*).

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the **Synoptic Gospels**. This means that these three gospels are similar to one another.

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST



Saint John wrote the **Gospel of John** and the **Book of Revelation**.

He was a **disciple** (*follower or student*) of **Jesus**, an **apostle** (*someone who is “sent out” to spread the news of Jesus Christ*) and an **evangelist** (*someone who brought the gospel to others*).

Public Domain - John at Patmos / The Nizhny Novgorod Art Museum

The Gospel of John supports the other three gospels, but is different from them. Saint John chooses to explain who Jesus is and why He came, instead of focusing on his life like the others.

WEEK 4: INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR GOSPELS

1ST - 2ND GRADE

GOALS

What is a gospel?
Who wrote the gospels?
What is the purpose of each of the four gospels? (*Older grades*)

LESSON

Materials Needed: Orthodox Children’s Bible, Icons of 4 Evangelists

Extended Learning Opportunity: “Crash Course on the Gospels - Conclusion” by Dr.

Jeannie Constantinou (This is a summary of 8 podcasts, all worth listening to!)

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The word **gospel** in Greek is *evangelion*. It means “good news or message.” The New Testament contains four gospels. These gospels tell us about the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, as well as, the message of salvation for each and every one of us. This year, we are studying the Gospel of Mark.

Who wrote the gospels?

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Song about who wrote the four gospels: <https://youtu.be/nRK-v9M-CAI>

GOSPEL OF MATTHEW:

Saint Matthew was one of the twelve disciples of Christ. A disciple is student. His gospel is the longest of the four gospels.

Examples of stories from the Gospel of Matthew:

- Matthew 5:1-12 (The Beatitudes)

GOSPEL OF MARK:

Saint Mark was one of the seventy apostles. He was a companion (*co-worker; a person who is frequently in the company of*) of St. Peter. He used the teachings of St. Peter as a guide for his gospel. His gospel is the shortest of the four gospels.

Examples of stories from the Gospel of Mark:

- Mark 7:31-37 (The Healing of a Deaf Man)

GOSPEL OF LUKE:

St. Luke was as a companion (*co-worker; a person who is frequently in the company of*) of St. Paul. He is also known as St. Luke the Physician. He is the only one of the evangelists to write a sequel to his gospel, the Acts of the Apostles, which is historical in presentation as well.

Examples of stories from the Gospel of Luke:

- Luke 1:5-25 (John's Birth Announced to Zacharias)

GOSPEL OF JOHN:

Saint John is the youngest of the twelve disciples and the only one of the disciples who remained with Christ at his crucifixion. Before Christ died on the Cross, he asked Saint John to take care of his mother, the Theotokos. (John 19:27) He is also known as Saint John the Beloved and Saint John the Theologian (*“to talk about God”*). He was the last to write his gospel and wrote the Book of Revelation as well.

Examples of stories from the Gospel of John:

- John 10:29-42 (I and My Father Are One)

REVIEW -

Questions:

- What does gospel mean? (*Good news or message*)
- What does evangelist mean and who are the four evangelists? (*Someone who brings the good news to others; Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*)
- When you're looking at an icon of one of the evangelists, what do they usually have in their hand? (*A book or scroll*) Why are they holding this? (*To remind us that they wrote a gospel about Jesus*)
- Who wrote the longest gospel? (*Matthew*) Who wrote the shortest gospel? (*Mark*)

WEEK 4: INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR GOSPELS

PRE-K - KINDERGARTEN

GOALS

What is a gospel?
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Examples of stories from the Gospel of Matthew:

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