

Gospels (Matthew – John)

Books in section:

- Matthew
- Mark
- Luke
- John

Timeline of writing: 60-90AD +/- 10 years

Timeline of events: Events surrounding Jesus' birth to His ascension 4 BC – 33AD +/- 4 yrs

Intertestamental Period (silent period) Context for the Gospels:

A Dark world defined:

- Confusing good and evil
- Without light, there is distress
- Progression leads to deeper darkness
- Pinnacle of spiritual depravity

Silent period between Old and New Testaments

- Spiritual darkness
- God not proving special revelation
- Bondage physically and spiritually
- This is the spiritual climate and need when Jesus is born

Intertestamental Period (silent period) Context for the Gospels:

- From the creation of man to the 5th century BC, God spoke to man. He did this in many ways including direct speech, visions, dreams, angels, through prophets, and even animals. For the 400 or so years preceding the Gospels, however, God was silent.
- Jews live in the land, though it is not theirs
- Jews worship at the temple, though high priests are appointed by government
- Hebrew language has been replaced with Aramaic and Greek
- Babylonian captivity led to development of synagogues and religious factions have developed such as Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, etc.
- The land, language, culture, worship, freedom, etc. of Israel are not as God desired.

Theological significance:

This section gets its name from the term gospel, meaning “good news.” The purpose is to present the good news of the Redeemer and Savior, Jesus. The Gospels present four portraits of Christ, allowing the reader to explore the very heart and mind of God. His words and actions provide understanding of exactly how God interacts with His creation. These books provide a clear understanding for the hope in Christ.

God's plan revealed through the Gospels:

- Matthew, Mark, Luke (synoptics)
- These books hold a similar view, share many of the same stories
 - Matthew
 - Jewish audience
 - Focuses on Jesus, the Teacher who fulfilled prophecy as King of the Jews
 - Mark
 - Roman audience
 - Focuses on Jesus, the Servant of the Lord
 - Luke
 - Greek audience
 - Focuses on Jesus, the Son of man (humanity of Jesus)
- John (Autoptic)
- This book holds a unique view, most of the stories are not found in the other Gospels
 - Greco-Roman/gentile audience
 - Focuses on Jesus, God in flesh (Deity of Jesus)
- Each portrait is relevant to various people and cultures today.
 - Matthew - Those seeking a king to rule righteously and end suffering
 - Mark - Those seeking a savior whose example we can follow
 - Luke - Those who seek a savior they can relate to
 - John - Those who seek a savior who has and will continue to destroy evil

How to Interpret:

- Utilize basic interpretive principles (OICA)
 - Observation, Interpretation, Correlation, Application
- Use these books to develop or sharpen your view of God, man, sin, salvation, etc.
 - When reading the Gospels, allow the text to answer “why would God...” type questions.
 - Rely on the text itself, not your memory of the events and teaching discussed.
 - Recognize the Holy Spirit's involvement, inspiring each author to emphasize different aspects of a similar event or teaching.
 - Pay attention to the details surrounding the actions and words of Jesus, they allow you to understand why Jesus said/did what he said/did.

Analyze and apply a passage:

- John 5:1-15
 - What happened?
 - What was the miracle?
 - Who was the audience that witnessed the miracle?
 - What was the context surrounding the miracle (i.e. time, place, situation?)
 - What was the response of the Jews, audience, and person who received the miracle, if applicable?
 - What did Jesus demonstrate about His power by performing the miracle?