

“The Gospels”

Matthew - John; Matthew 16:13-17 ¹

As we shift our view from the Old Testament to the New Testament, from the Hebrew Scriptures to the Christian Scriptures, we move into the sixth covenant God has made with humankind, the New Covenant made through Jesus’s sacrifice on our behalf, the last covenant before the final fulfillment of the New Creation. ²

The message of the New Testament is built on the message of the Old Testament, and the message of Jesus can’t be fully appreciated without the Old Covenant as context for the New. In the Garden of Eden, God began the Story with the promise that the offspring of the woman would triumph over the Serpent in the end (Genesis 3:15). God’s saving promises took significant steps forward in each of the covenants He made with Abraham, Moses, and David:

1. to **Abraham**, God promised a land, progeny, and blessing to all humankind (Genesis 12:1–3);
2. to **Moses**, God pledged to bless the young nation if Israel obeyed the Lord’s commands (Exodus 19–24);
3. to **David**, God promised that a King in David’s line would reign forever, and that through this King the promises originally made to Abraham would be fulfilled (2 Samuel 7; Psalms 89; 132); and finally,
4. through Jeremiah’s announcement of the **New Covenant**, God promised to give His Spirit to His people and write His law on their hearts (Jeremiah 31:31–34; Ezekiel 36:26–27).³

Centuries later, when Jesus burst onto the scene after John the Baptist’s introduction, they both announced the arrival of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:15), which meant that the promises God made to Abraham, Moses, and David were about to be realized. But, contrary to all expectation, God’s Kingdom did not arrive with apocalyptic power, but in a small and almost imperceptible way.

In some ways, the coming of the Kingdom was as undetectable as leaven mixed into flour, though the leaven would eventually transform the entire batch of dough (Matthew 13:31–33).⁴ And because the fulfillment of God’s promises came in such an unexpected way, many who witnessed that fulfillment failed to understand what they were seeing.

The four Gospels, which begin the New Testament and are our focus this morning, tell the story of Jesus’ life and ministry as He inaugurated the New Covenant. The Gospels are not biographies in the modern sense, but were written in the ancient genre known as *bios*. Whereas modern biographies tend to focus on the shaping of the early years and the inner struggles and development of the life being told, an ancient *bios* highlighted the key events that surrounded a person and his teaching, which is very much what the Gospels do.⁵

¹ A sermon by David C. Stancil, Ph.D., delivered at the Columbia Baptist Fellowship in Columbia, Maryland on July 28, 2013.

² A period of nearly five hundred years separates the writing of the last book of the Old Testament and the writing of the first book of the New Testament. These years are usually called “the Intertestamental Period,” a time characterized mostly by foreign oppression, and out of which the festival of Hanukkah came, celebrating the re-consecration of the Temple (after Syrian desecration of it) in 164 B.C.

539-331 B.C.	The Persian Period
331-164 B.C.	The Hellenistic Period
164-63 B.C.	The Maccabean (Hasmonean) Period
63 B.C. – A.D. 70	The Roman Period

³ *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), p. 1803.

⁴ *ESV*, p.1803.

⁵ *ESV*, p.1811.

The narrative in each of the Gospels moves toward and climaxes in Jesus' death and resurrection. Indeed, the narrative of Jesus' suffering and death—just one week of His life—consumes a huge amount of space in the Gospels, emphasizing that the cross and resurrection are the point of the Story.

Though the Gospels are historical writings that take historical events seriously, they are as much theological as historical, and they often present Jesus' ministry topically and theologically rather than chronologically.⁶ Three of the Gospels tell the story of Jesus "from the earth up," telling the story of how Jesus' followers gradually discovered who He was.

Mark begins with the preaching of John the Baptist, while Matthew and Luke start with the story of Jesus' unique birth. Taken together, Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the "Synoptic Gospels," meaning "with one eye, or one viewpoint," because their accounts are often very similar.

John, on the other hand, tells the story very much "from heaven down." He begins with the pre-incarnate Word becoming flesh and then works out the implications of that event, offering much more theological reflection than do the Synoptics.⁷

Some of you will have recognized the background of this week's PowerPoint as the ancient symbols of the four Gospels. The symbols of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle have long been used to represent the four Gospels (also known as the Four Evangelists—those who tell the Good News). These symbols are taken from Ezekiel 1:10 and Revelation 4:6-8, though neither of these passages makes any connection to the four Gospels. The symbolic connections between these passages and the Four Evangelists seem to have been made during the medieval period, and they are one of the most common motifs in churches of that era.⁸

With this brief introduction, then, let's take a look at the Four Gospels. Of all the sections of the Bible thus far, narrowing this one down has been the most difficult for me. Nearly every word is important in some way, and I find myself wanting to talk about everything! Although the chronological order of the writing of the Gospels was probably Mark, Luke, Matthew, and John,⁹ we'll take them in the order in which they appear in our Bibles.

MATTHEW

The earliest traditions of the church are unanimous in attributing the first Gospel to Matthew, the former tax collector who followed Jesus and became one of Jesus' 12 disciples. It is traditionally dated to about A.D. 60.¹⁰

Matthew crafted his account to demonstrate Jesus' messianic identity, His inheritance of the Davidic kingship over Israel, and His fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham to be a blessing to all the nations (Matthew 1:1; Genesis 12:1-3). While Matthew's Gospel is primarily an evangelistic essay that hoped to persuade Matthew's fellow Jews that Jesus was their long-awaited Messiah, Matthew's Gospel also presents very clearly the Good News that salvation through Jesus is available to all nations.

⁶ For example, Mark 2:1-3:6 reports five controversies in a row that Matthew spreads out over chapters 8-12.

⁷ ESV, p. 1811.

⁸ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_Evangelists

⁹ More information will be posted with the PowerPoint online.

¹⁰ ESV, p. 1815. In light of Irenaeus's assertion (c. A.D. 175) that Matthew composed his Gospel while Peter and Paul were still living (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.1.1), it is traditionally dated to the late 50s or early 60s.

As I've mentioned, deciding which verses to highlight in this message has truly been difficult. I've included many more Scriptures than what you'll see here in the PowerPoint that will be online this afternoon, and even that larger selection doesn't begin to do justice to the material. You're just going to have to read it for yourself!

After Matthew's birth narratives, one of the most important moments comes with Jesus' baptism, where we see God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit all appearing together, and each doing different things. All three of the Synoptics record Jesus' baptism and the overt presence of all the Persons of the Trinity in that event:¹¹

Matthew 3:16-17

*¹⁶ As soon as **Jesus** was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the **Spirit** of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷ And a **voice** from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."*

Jesus very clearly taught that He was not replacing or discarding God's previous revelations and commandments; rather, He had come to fulfill and to complete them:

Matthew 5:17

¹⁷ "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."

Each of the Gospel writers is careful to point out Jesus' authority over creation, His authority over all spirits, good and evil, and His authority to forgive sins, which only God can do:¹²

Matthew 8:26-27

²⁶ He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. ²⁷ The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"

Matthew 8:29

²⁹ "What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?"

Matthew 9:5-6

⁵ Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? ⁶ But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "Get up, take your mat and go home."

Each of the Synoptic Gospels highlights Life's Two Most Important Questions: "Who do you say that I am?" and "What do you want me to do for you?"¹³

Matthew 16:15

¹⁵ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Matthew 20:32

³² Jesus stopped and called them. "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.

Matthew and Mark record Jesus' identification of the Two Greatest Commandments:¹⁴

¹¹ See also the Father's affirmation of the Son in the Transfiguration Event (Matthew 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36).

¹² See also Mark 1:33-34, 3:11-12, 4:41; Luke 4:34, 41, 5:23-24, 7:48-49, 8:25.

¹³ See also Mark 8:29, 10:51; Luke 9:18-20, 18:41.

¹⁴ Refer to the harmony of the Gospels that is attached with this sermon.

Matthew 22:37-40

³⁷ Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Each of the Synoptic Gospels records Jesus’ inauguration of the New Covenant at that Passover meal we call The Last Supper. John doesn’t record this particular saying, but he does record much more that Jesus said and taught on that occasion:

Matthew 26:26-29

²⁶ While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.” ²⁷ Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸ This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

When Jesus died, offering the Perfect and Eternal Sacrifice for our Sin, the heavy curtain that had always separated humankind from God’s Presence was torn down by God’s own hand:

Matthew 27:51

⁵¹ At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

And finally, only Matthew recorded the familiar words of Jesus’ Great Commission, though Luke recorded a similar commission from Jesus at the time of His ascension back to heaven (Acts 1:8):¹⁵

Matthew 28:18-20

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

MARK

Mark is generally considered to be the first Gospel to be written, probably in the mid-50’s A.D., from Rome. The shortest of the four Gospels, Mark records more of Jesus’ miracles and less of His teaching than do the other Evangelists. Fully half of Mark focuses on the buildup toward the final week of Jesus’ ministry, and a quarter of its verses focus on the last week alone.¹⁶

Although Mark was not one of the Twelve, there is much evidence that Mark became Peter’s companion and writer and that Peter’s witness is the primary voice behind this Gospel. As evidence of this, Mark’s account is especially vivid when recounting incidents involving Peter, and it boldly presents Peter’s weaknesses and failures, while omitting praiseworthy references to Peter reported in Matthew and Luke.¹⁷

Mark’s story is fast-paced and action-packed, focusing on what Jesus said and did to explain His true mission in the world. For Mark, as for the other Evangelists, personal relationship with Jesus is the key to the Good News. Writing to an audience largely unfamiliar

¹⁵ And Mark records a similar statement in its disputed ending (16:15-18).

¹⁶ ESV, p. 1812.

¹⁷ ESV, p. 1889.

with Jewish customs, Mark often gives background for understanding those customs, because only then will his audience be able to understand Jesus as the fulfillment of God's work with Israel as well as with all of humankind.¹⁸

Like Matthew, Mark takes pains to call attention to Jesus' authority over evil spirits and over the Creation. Here's just one example:

Mark 1:33-34

³³ *The whole town gathered at the door, ³⁴ and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.*

Matthew and Mark give us interesting insight into Jesus' earthly family, mentioning in passing that Jesus had four half-brothers and at least two half-sisters, of which He was the oldest. It is partly from the absence of any mention of Jesus' father here that scholars infer Joseph's death at some point between Jesus' twelfth year and His adulthood:

Mark 6:1-3

¹ *Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. ² When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing?" ³ Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.*

Many of us find encouragement in the honesty of the father who asked Jesus to "help me overcome my unbelief" . . . and in the fact that Jesus met the man's need nonetheless:

Mark 9:23-24

²³ *"If you can?"* said Jesus. *"Everything is possible for one who believes."* ²⁴ *Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"*

LUKE

Whereas Mark's Gospel is the shortest, Luke's Gospel is the longest, presenting more of Jesus' parables than any of the Four. Like Mark, Luke was not one of the Twelve; and like Mark, Luke got his information primarily from one of the Apostles, in this case, Paul, since Luke was Paul's close friend, personal physician, and traveling companion.¹⁹

Luke's work actually has two parts, the second being the book of Acts, and both were addressed to someone named Theophilus. Luke is the only known Gentile among the New Testament authors. He takes special interest in God's love for the poor, outcasts, sinners, women, Samaritans, and Gentiles, and he probably wrote these books about A.D. 62.

Like Matthew, Luke provides an "infancy narrative," whereas Mark and John do not. Luke emphasizes God's sovereign rule over history, the arrival of the Kingdom of God, the coming of the Holy Spirit, the great reversals brought about by the Gospel, the dangers of wealth, and the importance of good stewardship.²⁰

¹⁸ ESV, p. 1890.

¹⁹ ESV, p. 1936.

²⁰ ESV, p. 1938. No Gospel encompasses such a complete range of subgenres as Luke: annunciation stories, birth narratives, lyric praise psalms, Christmas carols, prophecies, genealogies, preparation stories, temptation stories, calling stories, recognition stories, conflict stories, encounter

Luke's birth narrative is the best-known by far. It's what we know as "The Christmas Story":

Luke 1:31-33

³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

One of the many amazing parts of Luke's birth narrative is the clear connection he makes to Jesus' birth as the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy:

Luke 1:17

¹⁷ And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Malachi 4:5-6

⁵ "See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. ⁶ He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction."

Only Luke recorded Jesus' affirmation to His friends in Nazareth that He himself was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 61:1-2):

Luke 4:18-21

*¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."
²⁰ Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. ²¹ He began by saying to them, "**Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.**"*

Luke gives relatively more attention than do the other Evangelists to the dangers of material wealth:

Luke 12:15

¹⁵ Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."

Luke 12:31

³¹ But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

Luke 12:34

³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Luke 16:13

¹³ "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

Finally, only Luke gave us the Parable of the Prodigal Son, one of the Bible's most powerful pictures of God's passionate, enduring, persevering, and forgiving love for us:

stories, miracle stories, pronouncement stories, parables, beatitudes, sermons, proverbs, passion stories, trial narratives, and resurrection accounts.

Luke 15:20

²⁰ *So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.*

JOHN

The Fourth Gospel in order was also the last to be written, having been written by John, son of Zebedee and brother of James, the brothers Jesus called "the Sons of Thunder" (Mark 3:17). John was especially close to Jesus, being known as "the disciple whom Jesus loved,"²¹ and John's record of Jesus' ministry is more intimate and personal than the Synoptics are.

John presents Jesus as God in human flesh (1:14), as the revealer of the Father (14:9), and as the promised messianic King (1:41, 49, 4:25, 6:15). Whereas the Synoptics focus on the Kingdom of God, John's focus is on eternal life, which he mentions more than twice as often as the other three Gospels taken together:²² *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have **eternal life*** (John 3:16).

John's Gospel gives much attention to "Christology," or the study of who Jesus is, developing his case through Jesus' seven "I AM" statements²³ and His seven Messianic Signs.²⁴ While John was concerned to demonstrate that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah who fulfilled the Old Testament's prophecies about Him, John was also aware that many of his readers were not Jewish, so he frequently explained Jewish customs and Palestinian geography as they became relevant to his story.²⁵ The Gospel was probably written about A.D. 90.

Rather than beginning with genealogies or birth narratives, John begins in heaven itself, emphasizing that Jesus has always been "very God of very God":

John 1:1-5

¹ *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

² *He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

John 1:14

¹⁴ *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

It was Jesus Himself who gave us the term, "born again," and only John recorded its origin:

John 3:3

³ *Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."*

²¹ See 13:23, 19:26, 20:2, 21:20.

²² See 3:15-16, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:24, 39; 6:27, 40, 47, 54, 68; 10:28; 12:25, 50; 17:2-3.

²³ "I am the Bread of Life" (6:35); "I am the Light of the World" (8:12); "I am the Gate" (10:7); "I am the Good Shepherd" (10:11); "I am the Resurrection and the Life" (11:25); "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life" (14:6); "I am the Vine" (15:1).

²⁴ (1) turning water into wine (2:1-11); (2) healing the official's son (4:46-54); (3) healing at the pool of Bethesda (5:1-15); (4) feeding the 5,000 (6:5-13); (5) walking on the water (6:16-21); healing the man born blind (9:1-7); (7) raising Lazarus from the dead (11:1-44).

²⁵ ESV, p. 2015.

Consistent with his introductory prologue, John frequently records conversations where Jesus affirms His divinity:

John 4:25-26

²⁵ The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." ²⁶ Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."

John 5:18

¹⁸ For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

John 8:58

⁵⁸ "Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"

John 10:30

³⁰ I and the Father are one."

John 14:6

⁶ Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

John 11:25-26

²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶ and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

John 14:9

⁹ Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

Through John, Jesus made it clear that His sacrifice for our Sin was entirely voluntary. He didn't *have* to save us, but He *chose* to do it:

John 10:17-18

¹⁷ The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again.

¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

Only John recorded the depth of Jesus' final discourse to His disciples in the Upper Room. One of Jesus' many important teachings on that occasion was of the coming of the Holy Spirit:

John 16:7

⁷ But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

John 16:13

¹³ But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

From start to finish, John is very clear that he recorded Jesus' life and teaching for the purpose of encouraging faith in Him:

John 20:30-31

³⁰ *Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.* ³¹ *But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

HOMILY

As we try to get the big picture of the Gospel message, it seems to me that the key to all four of them, as well as the key to understanding the Bible as a whole, centers on Jesus' crucial conversation with His disciples at Caesarea Philippi:

¹³ *When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"*

¹⁴ *They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."*

¹⁵ ***"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"***

¹⁶ *Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."*

¹⁷ *Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven (Matthew 16:13-17).*

From this dialogue it seems clear that, no matter how remarkable Jesus' teaching was and no matter how amazing His deeds were, it was neither transparent nor evident who He really was . . . and it would appear that Jesus wanted it that way. His parables and enigmatic teachings were such that "mere human logic was not likely to come up with the right answer about [his identity]—it required a revelation from above."²⁶

The truth of the matter is that from the first day of creation until this very day, God has desired deep and personal loving relationship with humankind as the pinnacle of Creation, made in God's own image (Genesis 1:27); and yet from then until now, God has so respected our freedom to miss the point that the Good News continues to be veiled from any heart that does not yearn to know it.

I hope that you can sense that the question, **"Who do you say I am?"** is no idle theological question, but is the greatest question in all of life. And when Peter replied with *"You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God,"* he said far more than he knew.

The New Testament goes on to affirm that *"Jesus Christ is Lord"* (Philippians 2:11), and when you and I join in that affirmation, we're making the outrageous claim that "Jesus [of Nazareth] is utterly central to all that humans can know or experience. There is nothing imaginable that is irrelevant to him or to which he is irrelevant. There is no quarter of human learning in which he is not the central figure."²⁷

When we say that *"Jesus Christ is Lord,"* we affirm that He is the Creator of all things, the Sustainer of all things, the Goal of all things, the Redeemer of all things, and the Judge of all things. We are affirming that the entire created order is contingent upon Him at every point and in every moment (cp. Colossians 1:15-17; Psalm 33:6).²⁸

To say that *"Jesus Christ is Lord"* is to affirm that Jesus of Nazareth is Truth in every conceivable way. As C.S. Lewis pointed out, "There is no neutral ground in the universe; every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counter claimed by Satan."²⁹ And this

²⁶ Ben Witherington III, "Matthew," *Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary* (Macon, GA: 2006), p. 310.

²⁷ Duane Litfin, *Conceiving the Christian College* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), p. 44.

²⁸ Litfin, p. 39.

²⁹ C.S. Lewis, "Christianity and Culture," in *Christian Reflections*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), p. 33.

means that no matter what you and I do for a living, no matter whether we're at home or at work, shopping or playing, there are no neutral activities, no activities without spiritual significance.

The affirmation that "Jesus is Lord" means that God is at work, right now, right here, creating a new kind of person, persons who are allowing God to so shape their character that they are willing, ready, and eager to spend eternity with Him; persons who are choosing to join themselves together in a new kind of spiritual community that only God can build; persons who have been granted the ability to understand where God is at work and who have discovered the glad truth that nothing else in life matters nearly so much as becoming a part of that work.

My friend, if as you sit here this morning you're still trying to organize your life around what you want and around what you think will be good for you, then you don't yet understand. If you still think life is about you, then you don't get it yet.

If you're still trying to say to yourself that Jesus was "a good example" or "a wise teacher," then no matter what else you may say, you're still left in the end with a life that is the result of the random fluctuations of chance atoms. You're left morally adrift, with no anchor, compass, guide, or rule by which to evaluate government appointments, trustworthy science, successful parenting, academic excellence, or moral virtue.

Jesus' question, "**Who do you say I am?**" is the greatest, most central, most fundamental question in all of life. Your answer affects every choice you make, and it will determine your destiny.

The Bible says, "*Long ago, God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. But now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he made the universe and everything in it. The Son reflects God's own glory, and everything about him reflects God exactly. He sustains the universe by the mighty power of his command. After he died to cleanse us from the stain of sin, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God of heaven*" (Hebrews 1:1-3, NLT).

That's what the Bible says. **Who do YOU say Jesus is?**

CHART: 250 EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST/A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS

- from *The Life Application Bible*

All four books in the Bible that tell the story of Jesus Christ—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—stand alone, emphasizing a unique aspect of Jesus' life. But when these are blended into one complete account, or harmonized, we gain new insights about the life of Christ.

This harmony combines the four Gospels into a single chronological account of Christ's life on earth. It includes every chapter and verse of each Gospel, leaving nothing out.

The harmony is divided into 250 events. The title of each event is identical to the title found in the corresponding Gospel. Parallel passages found in more than one Gospel have identical titles, helping you to identify them quickly.

Each of the 250 events in the harmony is numbered. The number of the event corresponds to the number next to the title in the Bible text. When reading one of the Gospel accounts, you will notice, at times, that some numbers are missing or out of sequence. The easiest way to locate these events is to refer to the harmony.

In addition, if you are looking for a particular event in the life of Christ, the harmony can help you locate it more rapidly than paging through all four Gospels. Each of the 250 events has a distinctive title keyed to the main emphasis of the passage to help you locate and remember the events.

This harmony will help you to better visualize the travels of Jesus, study the four Gospels comparatively, and appreciate the unity of their message.

I.	BIRTH AND PREPARATION OF JESUS CHRIST	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
1	Luke's purpose in writing			1:1-4	
2	God became a human being				1:1-18
3	The ancestors of Jesus	1:1-17		3:23-38	
4	An angel promises the birth of John to Zechariah			1:5-25	
5	An angel promises the birth of Jesus to Mary			1:26-38	
6	Mary visits Elizabeth			1:39-56	
7	John the Baptist is born			1:57-80	
8	An angel appears to Joseph	1:18-25			
9	Jesus is born in Bethlehem			2:1-7	
10	Shepherds visit Jesus			2:8-20	
11	Mary and Joseph bring Jesus to the temple			2:21-40	
12	Visitors arrive from eastern lands	2:1-12			
13	The escape to Egypt	2:13-18			
14	The return to Nazareth	2:19-23			
15	Jesus speaks with the religious teachers			2:41-52	
16	John the Baptist prepares the way for Jesus	3:1-12	1:1-8	3:1-18	
17	John baptizes Jesus	3:13-17	1:9-11	3:21-22	

18	Satan tempts Jesus in the desert	4:1-11	1:12-13	4:1-13	
19	John the Baptist declares his mission				1:19-28
20	John the Baptist proclaims Jesus as the Messiah				1:29-34
21	The first disciples follow Jesus				1:35-51
22	Jesus turns water into wine				2:1-12
II. MESSAGE AND MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST					
		<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
23	Jesus clears the temple				2:12-25
24	Nicodemus visits Jesus at night				3:1-21
25	John the Baptist tells more about Jesus				3:22-36
26	Herod puts John in prison			3:19-20	
27	Jesus talks to a woman at the well				4:1-26
28	Jesus tells about the spiritual harvest				4:27-38
29	Many Samaritans believe in Jesus				4:39-42
30	Jesus preaches in Galilee	4:12-17	1:14-15	4:14-15	4:43-45
31	Jesus heals a government official's son				4:46-54
32	Jesus is rejected at Nazareth			4:16-30	
33	Four fishermen follow Jesus	4:18-22	1:16-20		
34	Jesus teaches with great authority		1:21-28	4:31-37	
35	Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law and many others	8:14-17	1:29-34	4:38-41	
36	Jesus preaches throughout Galilee	4:23-25	1:35-39	4:42-44	
37	Jesus provides miraculous catch of fish			5:1-11	
38	Jesus heals a man with leprosy	8:1-4	1:40-45	5:12-16	
39	Jesus heals a paralyzed man	9:1-8	2:1-12	5:17-26	
40	Jesus eats with sinners at Matthew's house	9:9-13	2:13-17	5:27-32	
41	Religious leaders ask Jesus about fasting	9:14-17	2:18-22	5:33-39	
42	Jesus heals a lame man by the pool				5:1-18
43	Jesus claims to be God's Son				5:19-30
44	Jesus supports his claim				5:31-47

45	The disciples pick wheat on the Sabbath	12:1-8	2:23-28	6:1-5	
46	Jesus heals a man's hand on the Sabbath	12:9-14	3:1-6	6:6-11	
47	Large crowds follow Jesus	12:15-21	3:7-12		
48	Jesus selects the twelve disciples		3:13-19	6:12-16	
49	Jesus gives the Beatitudes	5:1-12		6:17-26	
50	Jesus teaches about salt and light	5:13-16			
52	Jesus teaches about anger	5:21-26			
53	Jesus teaches about lust	5:27-30			
54	Jesus teaches about divorce	5:31-32			
55	Jesus teaches about vows	5:33-37			
56	Jesus teaches about retaliation	5:38-42			
57	Jesus teaches about loving enemies	5:43-48		6:27-36	
58	Jesus teaches about giving to the needy	6:1-4			
59	Jesus teaches about prayer	6:5-15			
60	Jesus teaches about fasting	6:16-18			
61	Jesus teaches about money	6:19-24			
62	Jesus teaches about worry	6:25-34			
63	Jesus teaches about criticizing others	7:1-6		6:37-42	
64	Jesus teaches about asking, seeking, knocking	7:7-12			
65	Jesus teaches about the way to heaven	7:13-14			
66	Jesus teaches about fruit in people's lives	7:15-20		6:43-45	
67	Jesus teaches about those who build houses on rock and sand	7:21-29		6:46-49	
68	A Roman centurion demonstrates faith	8:5-13		7:1-10	
69	Jesus raises a widow's son from the dead			7:11-17	
70	Jesus eases John's doubt	11:1-19		7:18-35	
71	Jesus promises rest for the soul	11:20-30			
72	A sinful woman anoints Jesus' feet			7:36-50	
73	Women accompany Jesus and the disciples			8:1-3	
74	Religious leaders accuse Jesus of being under Satan's power	12:22-37	3:20-30		
75	Religious leaders ask Jesus for a miracle	12:38-45			

76	Jesus describes his true family	12:46-50	3:31-35	8:19-21	
77	Jesus tells the parable of the four soils	13:1-9	4:1-9	8:4-8	
78	Jesus explains the parable of the four soils	13:10-23	4:10-25	8:9-18	
79	Jesus tells the parable of the growing seed		4:26-29		
80	Jesus tells the parable of the weeds	13:24-30			
81	Jesus tells the parable of the mustard seed	13:31-32	4:30-34		
82	Jesus tells the parable of the yeast	13:33-35			
83	Jesus explains the parable of the weeds	13:36-43			
84	Jesus tells the parable of hidden treasure	13:44			
85	Jesus tells the parable of the pearl merchant	13:45-46			
86	Jesus tells the parable of the fishing net	13:47-52			
87	Jesus calms the storm	8:23-27	4:35-41	8:22-25	
88	Jesus sends the demons into a herd of pigs	8:28-34	5:1-20	8:26-39	
89	Jesus heals a bleeding woman and restores a girl to life	9:18-26	5:21-43	8:40-56	
90	Jesus heals the blind and mute	9:27-34			
91	The people of Nazareth refuse to believe	13:53-58	6:1-6		
92	Jesus urges the disciples to pray for workers	9:35-38			
93	Jesus sends out the twelve disciples	10:1-16	6:7-13	9:1-6	
94	Jesus prepares the disciples for persecution	10:17-42			
95	Herod kills John the Baptist	14:1-12	6:14-29	9:7-9	
96	Jesus feeds five thousand	14:13-21	6:30-44	9:10-17	6:1-15
97	Jesus walks on water	14:22-33	6:45-52		6:16-21
98	Jesus heals all who touch him	14:34-36	6:53-56		
99	Jesus is the true bread from heaven				6:22-40
100	The Jews disagree that Jesus is from heaven				6:41-59
101	Many disciples desert Jesus				6:60-71
102	Jesus teaches about inner purity	15:1-20	7:1-23		

103	Jesus sends a demon out of a girl	15:21-28	7:24-30		
104	The crowd marvels at Jesus' healings	15:29-31	7:31-37		
105	Jesus feeds four thousand	15:32-39	8:1-10		
106	Religious leaders ask for a sign in the sky	16:1-4	8:11-13		
107	Jesus warns against wrong teaching	16:5-12	8:14-21		
108	Jesus restores sight to a blind man		8:22-26		
111	Jesus is transfigured on the mountain	17:1-13	9:2-13	9:28-36	
112	Jesus heals a demon-possessed boy	17:14-21	9:14-29	9:37-43	
113	Jesus predicts his death the second time	17:22-23	9:30-32	9:44-45	
114	Peter finds the coin in the fish's mouth	17:24-27			
115	The disciples argue about who would be the greatest	18:1-6	9:33-37	9:46-48	
116	The disciples forbid another to use Jesus' name		9:38-41	9:49-50	
117	Jesus warns against temptation	18:7-9	9:42-50		
118	Jesus warns against looking down on others	18:10-14			
119	Jesus teaches how to treat a believer who sins	18:15-20			
120	Jesus tells the parable of the unforgiving debtor	18:21-35			
121	Jesus' brothers ridicule him				7:1-9
122	Jesus teaches about the cost of following him	8:18-22		9:51-62	
123	Jesus teaches openly at the temple				7:10-31
124	Religious leaders attempt to arrest Jesus				7:32-52
125	Jesus forgives an adulterous woman				7:53-8:11
126	Jesus is the light of the world				8:12-20
127	Jesus warns of coming judgment				8:21-30
128	Jesus speaks about God's true children				8:31-47
129	Jesus states he is eternal				8:48-59
130	Jesus sends out seventy-two messengers			10:1-16	
131	The seventy-two messengers return			10:17-24	

132	Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan			10:25-37	
133	Jesus visits Mary and Martha			10:38-42	
134	Jesus teaches his disciples about prayer			11:1-13	
135	Jesus answers hostile accusations			11:14-28	
136	Jesus warns against unbelief			11:29-32	
137	Jesus teaches about the light within			11:33-36	
138	Jesus criticizes the religious leaders			11:37-54	
139	Jesus speaks against hypocrisy			12:1-12	
140	Jesus tells the parable of the rich fool			12:13-21	
141	Jesus warns about worry			12:22-34	
142	Jesus warns about preparing for his coming			12:35-48	
143	Jesus warns about coming division			12:49-53	
144	Jesus warns about the future crisis			12:54-59	
145	Jesus calls the people to repent			13:1-9	
146	Jesus heals the crippled woman			13:10-17	
147	Jesus teaches about the kingdom of God			13:18-21	
148	Jesus heals the man who was born blind				9:1-12
149	Religious leaders question the blind man				9:13-34
150	Jesus teaches about spiritual blindness				9:35-41
151	Jesus is the Good Shepherd				10:1-21
152	Religious leaders surround Jesus at the temple				10:22-42
153	Jesus teaches about entering the kingdom			13:22-30	
154	Jesus grieves over Jerusalem			13:31-35	
155	Jesus heals a man with dropsy			14:1-6	
156	Jesus teaches about seeking honor			14:7-14	
157	Jesus tells the parable of the great feast			14:15-24	
158	Jesus teaches about the cost of being a disciple			14:25-35	
159	Jesus tells the parable of the lost sheep			15:1-7	

160	Jesus tells the parable of the lost coin			15:8-10	
161	Jesus tells the parable of the lost son			15:11-32	
162	Jesus tells the parable of the shrewd manager			16:1-18	
163	Jesus tells about the rich man and the beggar			16:19-31	
164	Jesus tells about forgiveness and faith			17:1-10	
165	Lazarus becomes ill and dies				11:1-16
167	Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead				11:38-44
168	Religious leaders plot to kill Jesus				11:45-57
169	Jesus heals ten men with leprosy			17:11-19	
170	Jesus teaches about the coming of the kingdom of God			17:20-37	
171	Jesus tells the parable of the persistent widow			18:1-8	
172	Jesus tells the parable of two men who prayed			18:9-14	
173	Jesus teaches about marriage and divorce	19:1-12	10:1-12		
174	Jesus blesses little children	19:13-15	10:13-16	18:15-17	
175	Jesus speaks to the rich young man	19:16-30	10:17-31	18:18-30	
176	Jesus tells the parable of the workers paid equally	20:1-16			
177	Jesus predicts his death the third time	20:17-19	10:32-34	18:31-34	
178	Jesus teaches about serving others	20:20-28	10:35-45		
179	Jesus heals a blind beggar	20:29-34	10:46-52	18:35-43	
180	Jesus brings salvation to Zacchaeus's home			19:1-10	
181	Jesus tells the parable of the king's ten servants			19:11-27	
182	A woman anoints Jesus with perfume	26:6-13	14:3-9		12:1-11
183	Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey	21:1-11	11:1-11	19:28-44	12:12-19
184	Jesus clears the temple again	21:12-17	11:12-19	19:45-48	
185	Jesus explains why he must die				12:20-36
186	Most of the people do not believe in Jesus				12:37-43
187	Jesus summarizes his message				12:44-50

188	Jesus says the disciples can pray for anything	21:18-22	11:20-26		
189	Religious leaders challenge Jesus' authority	21:23-27	11:27-33	20:1-8	
190	Jesus tells the parable of the two sons	21:28-32			
191	Jesus tells the parable of the wicked tenants	21:33-46	12:1-12	20:9-19	
192	Jesus tells the parable of the wedding feast	22:1-14			
193	Religious leaders question Jesus about paying taxes	22:15-22	12:13-17	20:20-26	
194	Religious leaders question Jesus about the resurrection	22:23-33	12:18-27	20:27-40	
195	Religious leaders question Jesus about the greatest commandment	22:34-40	12:28-34		
196	Religious leaders cannot answer Jesus question	22:41-46	12:35-37	20:41-44	
197	Jesus warns against the religious leaders	23:1-12	12:38-40	20:45-47	
198	Jesus condemns the religious leaders	23:13-36			
199	Jesus grieves over Jerusalem again	23:37-39			
200	A poor widow gives all she has		12:41-44	21:1-4	
201	Jesus tells about the future	24:1-25	13:1-23	21:5-24	
202	Jesus tells about his return	24:26-35	13:24-31	21:25-33	
203	Jesus tells about remaining watchful	24:36-51	13:32-37	21:34-38	
204	Jesus tells the parable of the ten bridesmaids	25:1-13			
205	Jesus tells the parable of the loaned money	25:14-30			
206	Jesus tells about the final judgment	25:31-46			
III. DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST					
		<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
207	Religious leaders plot to kill Jesus	26:1-5	14:1-2	22:1-2	
208	Judas agrees to betray Jesus	26:14-16	14:10-11	22:3-6	
209	Disciples prepare for the Passover	26:17-19	14:12-16	22:7-13	
210	Jesus washes the disciples' feet				13:1-20
211	Jesus and the disciples have the Last Supper	26:20-30	14:17-26	22:14-30	13:21-30
212	Jesus predicts Peter's denial			22:31-38	13:31-38

213	Jesus is the way to the Father				14:1-14
214	Jesus promises the Holy Spirit				14:15-31
215	Jesus teaches about the vine and the branches				15:1-17
216	Jesus warns about the world's hatred				15:18- 16:4
217	Jesus teaches about the Holy Spirit				16:5-15
218	Jesus teaches about using his name in prayer				16:16-33
219	Jesus prays for himself				17:1-5
220	Jesus prays for his disciples				17:6-19
221	Jesus prays for future believers				17:20-26
222	Jesus again predicts Peter's denial	26:31-35	14:27-31		
223	Jesus agonizes in the garden	26:36-46	14:32-42	22:39-46	
224	Jesus is betrayed and arrested	26:47-56	14:43-52	22:47-53	18:1-11
225	Annas questions Jesus				18:12-24
226	Caiaphas questions Jesus	26:57-68	14:53-65		
227	Peter denies knowing Jesus	26:69-75	14:66-72	22:54-65	18:25-27
228	The council of religious leaders condemns Jesus	27:1-2	15:1	22:66-71	
229	Judas kills himself	27:3-10			
230	Jesus stands trial before Pilate	27:11-14	15:2-5	23:1-5	18:28-37
231	Jesus stands trial before Herod			23:6-12	
232	Pilate hands Jesus over to be crucified	27:15-26	15:6-15	23:13-25	18:38- 19:16
233	Roman soldiers mock Jesus	27:27-31	15:16-20		
234	Jesus is led away to be crucified	27:32-34	15:21-24	23:26-31	19:17
235	Jesus is placed on the cross	27:35-44	15:25-32	23:32-43	19:18-27
236	Jesus dies on the cross	27:45-56	15:33-41	23:44-49	19:28-37
237	Jesus is laid in the tomb	27:57-61	15:42-47	23:50-56	19:38-42
238	Guards are posted at the tomb	27:62-66			
239	Jesus rises from the dead	28:1-7	16:1-8	24:1-12	20:1-9
240	Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene		16:9-11		20:10-18
241	Jesus appears to the women	28:8-10			
242	Religious leaders bribe the guards	28:11-15			
243	Jesus appears to two believers traveling on the road		16:12-13	24:13-35	

244	Jesus appears to the disciples behind locked doors			24:36-43	20:19-23
245	Jesus appears to the disciples including Thomas		16:14		20:24-31
246	Jesus appears to the disciples while fishing				21:1-14
247	Jesus talks with Peter				21:15-25
248	Jesus gives the Great Commission	28:16-20	16:15-18		
249	Jesus appears to the disciples in Jerusalem			24:44-49	
250	Jesus ascends into heaven		16:19-20	24:50-53	