

Four Gospels, One Jesus

What does the word 'gospel' mean?

Gospel is a translation of the Greek word 'euangelion', which means good news. In Roman times, this term was used for the announcement of a king's victory or reign.

Observation begins with asking questions. If we never take the time to ask why, then we miss out on insights and the deeper wonder of who God is. Think about what you know of the gospels, and what you don't know, and jot down ten questions you have. For example, why are there four gospels?

Four Gospels

Who, What, When, Where, and Why?

Gospel				
Who wrote it?				
When was it written?				
Who was the audience?				
What is the theological focus?	Jesus the...	Jesus the...	Jesus the...	Jesus the...

What is the benefit of having multiple gospels?

What is a gospel harmony? What gospel harmonies have you read or *watched*?

What genres do each of the gospels fit into?

What about the other gospels?

You may have heard of other gospels that aren't included in the canon of the New Testament. These include the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Peter, the Gospel of Judas, and other various secret gospels, infancy gospels, or gospel fragments.

Each text in the New Testament had to meet several criteria.

- 1) The text had to have an apostolic origin or have been written by someone who was an associate of one of the apostles.
- 2) The text had to demonstrate orthodoxy and be consistent with other accepted canonical texts theologically.
- 3) The text had to be widely used in church tradition for some time.

While other gospels may not be wrong or inaccurate, they simply failed to meet one or more of the criteria required to be considered an inspired part of God's word. However, some apocryphal gospels are outright forgeries, so be cautious and do some research before reading.

Some suggest that the fact that there are precisely **four** gospels is significant. What conclusions would you draw based on these passages?

Genesis 2:10 A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers.

1 Chronicles 9:26 for the four chief gatekeepers, who were Levites, were entrusted to be over the chambers and the treasures of the house of God.

Isaiah 11:12

He will raise a signal for the nations
and will assemble the banished of Israel,
and gather the dispersed of Judah
from the four corners of the earth.

Revelation 4:8 And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,
“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come!”

John 20:30-31

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Why would John include this conclusion? What is his intention in adding this?

If you were writing the story of Jesus, what would be the first thing you would include, and why?

Dive Deeper

If you want to keep studying on your own this week, check out these resources:

- Four Portraits, One Jesus by Mark L. Strauss (\$30 on Amazon)
- BibleProject's video on the Gospel (<https://bibleproject.com/videos/euangelion-gospel/>)