

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

Class 1

The Four Living Creatures

"And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind." — Revelation 4:6

"And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." — Revelation 4:8

Ezekiel's vision is fulfilled when these four figures appear. While we know them as the four evangelists, spiritually they represent an ox, a lion, a man, and an eagle.

Mark corresponds to the second living creature: an ox, an animal considered for service. Mark presents Jesus as a servant who obeys His Father's commands. When the disciples argue among themselves, wondering who is the greatest, Jesus tells them:

"But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister;" Mark 10:43

John likens the fourth living creature to an eagle in flight. John views Jesus as God. John exalts the figure of God and His divinity, defending it before the Jews. One of his first statements is: *"and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."*

Luke views Jesus as a man and represents the third living creature. He compiled all the data regarding Jesus as a man.

"And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground." — Luke 22:44

A lion, the king of the beasts, represents the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew presents Jesus as a king. His gospel begins by tracing Jesus' genealogy, stating that Jesus descends from David and Abraham, then enumerating the kings until he reaches Him.

Only Matthew states in his gospel:

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." — Matthew 2:1-2

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

The Gospel of Matthew is represented by a lion, the king of the beasts. Matthew presents Jesus as a king.

The Origins

Tradition attributes the first gospel to Matthew Levi, a tax collector or publican whom Jesus called to be one of His twelve disciples (Matthew 9:9-13, 10:3). Virtually nothing is known about him except his name and occupation. After the list of apostles in the Book of Acts (1:13), he disappears from church history, except for allusions that are probably due to legend. Nowhere in the first gospel does he explicitly claim authorship, but early church writers, when discussing the gospel's literary authorship, attributed it to Matthew.

Eusebius (around 325 A.D.) quotes Papias (who lived around 100 A.D.), saying that Matthew composed the oracles of the Lord in Aramaic, which were later translated into Greek. Irenaeus, approximately a century and a half before Eusebius, declared that *“Matthew also issued a Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome and laying the foundations of the Church.”*

Several inferences can be deduced from these primitive statements regarding the origin of the first gospel:

- **First:** The literary authorship of Matthew was indisputable. Since Matthew was a relatively ignored member of the apostolic group, there is no good reason to make him the author of a spurious production. Any forger seeking fame would have chosen the name of a renowned apostle to publish it under.
- **Second:** The consensus of early writers agrees regarding Matthew's well-known character. As a publican, he was well educated and accustomed to keeping notes as part of his business.
- **Third:** The tradition that this gospel was originally written in Aramaic does not exclude the possibility that the author later published a Greek edition, which quickly displaced the older one.

Date and Place

The precise date of this gospel's writing remains unknown. Regarding the Christian Church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:4), the local church would not need a written gospel while the apostles were present to answer questions and impart genuine teaching. It is doubtful that it was written after 70 A.D., because the prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem contains no allusion to the city having already fallen (Matthew 24:1-28).

The testimony of Irenaeus, previously cited, would place its composition during Nero's reign, *“when Paul and Peter were in Rome.”* If this tradition is true, Matthew must have originally composed his gospel for converts who did not speak the

Aramaic of Palestine, and who therefore lacked access to the apostles, consequently needing to know about Jesus through a written text.

Textual Divisions and Content

Its content is divided into five blocks of text, each shaped around a dominant theme and ending with the phrase *“And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended...”*. Including the introductory narrative and the final passion narrative, it has seven divisions in total. An epilogue summarizes these divisions and places the reader before the consequences of Jesus' messianic demands.

The sharp contrast between the priests' response to the guard's report and the disciples' response to the revelation of their resurrected Lord compels the reader to decide which of these two attitudes to adopt. One would be to align oneself with the Jewish leaders who rejected Jesus and ignored His demands under any circumstances; the other is to become a disciple oneself.

MATTHEW: THE GOSPEL OF THE MESSIAH

- **I. Fulfillment of Prophecies Concerning the Messiah. His Coming.** (1:1-4:11)
- **II. Exposition of the Principles of the Messiah. Inaugural Discourse: Challenge to Enter.** (4:12-7:29, 7:13-14)
- **III. Revelation of the Messiah's Power. The Miracles: Challenge to Follow Him.** (8:1-11:1, 10:34-39)
- **IV. The Messiah Explains His Program. The Parables: Challenge to Accept It, Challenge to Understand It.** (11:2-13:53, 11:28, 13:51)
- **V. The Messiah Declares His Purpose. The Crisis of the Cross: Challenge to Testify of It.** (13:54-19:1, 16:13-15)
- **VI. Presentation of the Problems of the Messiah. Conflicts with His Opponents: Challenge to Repentance.** (19:4-26:1, 23:37-39)
- **VII. Fulfillment of the Messiah's Passion. Death and Resurrection I & II.** (26:3-28:10)
- **VIII. Epilogue. Rumor and Reality: Challenge to Action.** (28:11-20, 28:16-20)

Structural Analysis of the Sections

These sections first familiarize the reader with the background of the Messiah's story. First and foremost, His genealogy is declared in the very first verse, rooting itself in Abraham—who first received the promises of God—and in David—the divinely elected founder of the royal house of Judah—and the subsequent verses proceed to demonstrate this. The first section follows the account of the virgin birth, along with the baptism and temptation that prepared Him for His public works. In this

section of three and a half chapters, the phrase *“that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying”* or something similar appears at least five times. In this way, the coming of Jesus is described as the fulfillment of the divine purpose revealed in the Old Testament, a purpose partially carried out throughout the historical process before His arrival.

The second section begins when the Lord Jesus appeared in Galilee after John the Baptist's imprisonment. It largely focuses on declaring the spiritual and ethical principles of the messianic kingdom. Jesus summoned men, calling them to repentance and faith in Him, and the step that declared the kingdom to them—in which He is Lord—sought to describe that kingdom's nature and how one would enter it.

The standard of righteousness upheld in the Sermon on the Mount does not conform to human ideals; rather, it consists of knowing Christ, hearing His words, and obeying them (7:23-24). The full significance of Christ's person and His work was not yet realized, but here the necessity of making Him the very center of all His teaching and everything related to faith is established unequivocally.

For these principles to be valid in the minds of those who were to believe, they needed proof of Jesus' power. The third section of Matthew (8:1-11:1) is primarily concerned with recounting various types of miracles in which Jesus demonstrated His power over sickness:

- **Leprosy** (8:1-4)
- **Palsy** (parálisis temblorosa, as in the English version — 8:5-13)
- **Fever** (8:14-17)
- **Paralysis** (9:2-8)
- **Issue of blood** (9:20-22)
- **Blindness** (9:27-31)
- Additionally, over **demons** (8:28-34, 9:32-34), over the **powers of nature** (8:23-27), and over **death** (9:18, 23-26).

The commission given to the Twelve, described in Matthew 10, can be seen as the first time Jesus delegated His power to men, along with His repeated reassurance that He would not fail them as they went out to put it into practice. The preaching of the Messiah was not precisely the proclamation of a new ideal. Still, it did have to be the demonstration of a new power—a concept that the Book of Acts affirms became a reality in the subsequent life of the church: *“And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all”* (Acts 4:33).

Such wonderful accomplishments, whether by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself or by His disciples, were neither sporadic nor aimless displays of power. Jesus sought to teach the multitude, inaugurating a program for His kingdom rather than merely bewildering or astonishing the crowds.

From the beginning of the fourth section of Matthew (11:2-13:53), parables stand out prominently. Not all of them belong to this part of the gospel, but the largest group is found here in chapter thirteen. Using figures drawn from daily life, they portray the

nature and program of the kingdom of heaven, particularly with reference to the future.

Jesus declared that the parables were intended both to reveal and to hide the truth, because when the disciples asked Him why He spoke to the multitudes in parables, He answered them:

"Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." — **Matthew 13:11**

Jesus wanted His teachings to be clear to those open to them and obscure to those who were rebellious.

There are eight parables in this list:

1. **The Soils** (13:1-23)
2. **The Wheat and the Tares** (13:24-30, 36-43)
3. **The Mustard Seed** (13:31-32)
4. **The Leaven** (13:33)
5. **The Hidden Treasure** (13:44)
6. **The Pearl of Great Price**
(13:45-46)
7. **The Dragnet** (13:47-50)
8. **The Householder** (13:51-52)

The list is divided at verse 36, where it says Jesus withdrew from the multitudes and came into the house, so four parables were intended for the crowd and four for the disciples.

The first four, therefore, present the kingdom of heaven to the multitude. Its beginning, through the sowing of the word of God; the various types of hearers who receive it; the contrast between the true response and the false, in the wheat and the tares; the astonishing growth of the kingdom from its tiny beginning into a large tree; and the dynamic forces of the kingdom compared to leaven: these were all factors He wanted the people to know.

The last four deal with the kingdom's internal aspects: the cost of acquisition the treasure and the pearl; the two final destinies, wicked and just, temporarily brought together in the net; and the blending of new and old elements in His teaching.

All the parables indicate that Jesus did not consider Himself a mere Jewish reformer, but a sovereign of the earth and a figure of global importance.

Chapters eleven and twelve, which precede the parables, contain additional discourses that uphold the nature and importance of His work. The question of John the Baptist (11:2-19), the rejection of Jesus by the cities of Galilee (11:20-24), His authority over the Sabbath (12:1-14), and over demons (12:22-37), all contribute to understanding His work as that of a supernatural figure who came to Earth in fulfillment of an extraordinary commission.

In section V of Matthew (13:54-19:2), the crisis of that mission is anticipated. The rejection of Jesus by His fellow citizens (13:54-58), Herod's prejudice in the execution of John the Baptist (14:1-12), and the disciples' lack of understanding (15:1-16, 16:5-12) expose forces that compelled Jesus to declare the imminence of

the cross, alongside the revelation of Himself in the transfiguration (16:21-17:8). From this point in the narrative onward, the cross gains more and more prominence before Jesus and becomes the immediate objective of His earthly career.

The declaration of the messianic purpose triggered the conflict. Chapters 19:3-26:2 describe the Messiah's problems and, in specific events, His conflicts with His opponents—such as the debates with the Herodians, the Sadducees, and the Pharisees (22:15-40). The denunciations in chapter twenty-three and the prediction of Jerusalem's desolation in chapters twenty-four and twenty-five sprang from this conflict.

The conflict had to be resolved in a crisis, and in the life of the Messiah, that crisis was the cross. From Matthew 26:3 to 28:10, His Passion, death, and resurrection are described. Matthew insists on the messianic character of His death, highlighting its relationship with prophecy. Four times Jesus clearly alluded to the Old Testament regarding the events of His Passion (26:31, 54, 56; 27:9), and when answering Caiaphas' question, He applied the title Son of Man to Himself (26:64), a title applied in Daniel 7:13-14 to a heavenly figure.

The epilogue summarizes the entire gospel, driving home its teaching by taking as an example the two attitudes toward Jesus: rejecting Him out of unbelief, or worshiping Him after accepting Him.

Each section contains a challenge to the disciples expressed by Jesus, which clearly reflects the author's intention for it to also challenge whoever reads it. At the End of the instructional section containing the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus called His disciples to take the first step on the path that leads to life (Matthew 7:13-14). As soon as He proved His power, He commissioned them as witnesses and challenged them to take up the cross and follow Him (10:34-41). There is a double challenge in the section dealing with the explanation of His program: one is directed to the multitude to come to Him and rest (11:28), and the other to His disciples, asking them if they have understood His words (13:51). He wanted them to understand perfectly that His demands required a response from both the will and the intellect. At the crucial turning point of His life, the prediction of the cross brought forth a searching question: *"But whom say ye that I am?"* (16:15). Having been rejected by Jerusalem, He was constrained to invite the rebellious city to repentance (23:37-39). At the end of the story, the Great Commission is heard: "Go ye therefore..."—the final appeal of the gospel as a whole. In this way, each section is practically applied to prompt the action the reader must assume as they advance through the book.

Emphasis

The Gospel of Matthew was written to show how Jesus of Nazareth expanded and explained the revelation that had begun in the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. Although its character is markedly Jewish, it was also written for the benefit of the Gentiles, since the final commission commands the Twelve to make disciples *"of all nations"* (28:19). If it was originally composed for the benefit of the church in Antioch, where Gentile converts were first seen in large numbers, the reason for its Jewish character appears with complete clarity. Matthew sought to

explain the meaning of Jesus' ministry to those converts using Old Testament terms accepted by his Jewish colleagues and taught to them.

There are certain incidents unique to Matthew. The vision of Joseph (1:20-24), the visit of the wise men (2:1-12), the flight to Egypt (2:13-15), the slaughter of the infants (2:16), the dream of Pilate's wife (27:19), the death of Judas (27:3-10), the resurrection of the saints at the crucifixion (27:52), the bribing of the soldiers (28:12-15), and the commission to baptize (28:19-20) do not appear in any of the other gospels. Among the parables, those of the tares (13:24-30, 36-43), the hidden treasure (13:44), the pearl (13:45-46), the dragnet (13:47), the unmerciful servant (18:23-35), the laborers in the vineyard (20:1-16), the two sons (21:28-32), the wedding garment (22:1-13), the ten virgins (25:1-13), and the talents (25:14-30) are exclusive to Matthew.

Matthew is the Gospel of the Discourses

In each of the sections previously examined, there is what we might call a long discourse, as seen in the following table:

Section	Focus / dominant theme	Textual Reference
I	Prophecies Fulfilled	Matthew 1:1 - 4:11
II	Proclamation of Principles	Matthew 4:12 - 7:29
III	Manifestation of Power	Matthew 8:1 - 11:1
IV	Explanation of the Program	Matthew 11:2 - 13:53
V	Declaration of Purpose	Matthew 13:54 - 19:2
VI	Presentation of Problems	Matthew 19:3 - 26:2
VII	Fulfillment of the Passion	Matthew 26:3 - 28:10
VIII	Epilogue	Matthew 28:11 - 20

Matthew is the Gospel of the King

In Matthew, emphasis is placed not only on the doctrine of the kingdom, but also on the kingship of Christ throughout the entire Gospel. The genealogy of the first chapter follows the royal line of Judah. Herod's terror is explained by the fact that Jesus' birth implied the appearance of a political rival. The triumphal entry into Jerusalem highlights His arrival as a king riding peacefully upon a donkey (21:5, 7). In the Olivet discourse, He predicts that He will sit *"upon the throne of his glory"* (25:31). The inscription placed by Pilate upon the cross read: *"THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS"* (27:37).

Class 2

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Mark corresponds to the second living creature: an ox, an animal considered for service. Mark presents Jesus as a servant.

Who Was Mark the Evangelist?

The Book of Acts narrates that when James and Peter were imprisoned, James was put to death, but Peter was delivered from prison with the help of an angel and proceeded to the house of Mary, the mother of Mark, who was also called John.

The Origins

Comparatively little is known about this gospel's author. Nowhere in the book is he named; it contains relatively few passages that indicate his interests and personality, much less anything that would identify him.

Tradition identifies him with John Mark, a descendant of a Christian family in Jerusalem, who served as an assistant and deputy to Paul, Barnabas, and perhaps Peter. His precise birth date is unknown, but he was likely approximately ten years younger than the apostles. In other words, he was about twenty years old at the time of the crucifixion. He was Mary's son, a friend of the apostles mentioned in Acts 12.

The prayer meeting to intercede for Peter's release was held at her home, which may have served as the headquarters for Christian leaders in Jerusalem.

Evidently, Peter sought out this location as his first stop after being released from prison (Acts 12:12), indicating he was certain he would find his colleagues there at that hour. This house may have contained the "upper room" where Jesus and His disciples celebrated the first Holy Supper and gathered to pray before Pentecost. If so, Mark was well connected with the leaders of the Christian movement almost from its inception.

Mark's family was well-to-do, as his mother owned her own home and had servants. Hayes suggests that Mark was *"the prodigal son of a wealthy widow."* Barnabas, his cousin, was undoubtedly a man of means, because he sold a piece of land and

"brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet" (Acts 4:37). Their original home was likely Cyprus; in any case, Barnabas originated from there (Acts 4:36). It appears Mark grew up in an environment where piety and culture were combined.

He was introduced to the ministry by his cousin Barnabas, who, after the visit he made to Jerusalem with Paul (as recorded in Acts 11:30), returned to Antioch bringing Mark along with him (Acts 12:25). When Barnabas and Paul departed on their first missionary journey, Mark accompanied them as an assistant or deputy (Acts 13:5). He remained working with them in Cyprus. Still, when they left from there to venture into Asia, he departed from them and returned to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). The reason for his defection is not given. Still, the implication suggests he did not feel called to that work or experienced an emotional reaction. Perhaps he did not enjoy Paul's company; perhaps he lacked interest in the mission among the Gentiles. The fact remains that he did not press onward with them.

After they returned to Antioch and the Jerusalem council met, Barnabas wanted John Mark to accompany them on their second journey. Paul opposed this because Mark *“went not with them to the work”* (Acts 15:37-39). Their disagreement was so sharp that they had to part ways. Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus, while Paul, with a new assistant, departed to continue the mission in Asia.

At this juncture, probably around 50 A.D., Mark disappears from the New Testament narrative and does not reappear for ten years. However, in the Epistle to the Colossians, Mark has reunited with Paul's group in Rome, and the apostle recommends him to the church at Colossae. Later, Paul describes him as *“he is profitable to me for the ministry”* (II Timothy 4:11). The old disagreement has been resolved; Mark evidently regained Paul's high esteem. It seems equally likely that he was associated with Peter during this same period (I Peter 5:13). He was in the church from the very beginning and actively witnessed from Jerusalem to Rome during the years spanning 30 to 65 A.D. A tradition preserved by Eusebius affirms that Mark founded the churches in Alexandria.

Date and Place

Early testimony regarding the Gospel of Mark generally relates to Peter's preaching in Rome during the seventh decade of the Christian era.

Papias (around 115 A.D.), as quoted by Eusebius (around 375 A.D.), states:

“And John the presbyter also said this: Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately whatsoever he remembered. However, he did not relate the sayings or deeds of Christ in exact order. For he neither heard the Lord nor accompanied Him. But afterward, as I said, he accompanied Peter, who accommodated his instructions to the necessities of his hearers, but with no intention of giving a regular narrative of the Lord's sayings. Wherefore Mark made no mistake in thus writing some things as he remembered them. For of one thing he took especial care, not to omit anything he had heard, and not to put anything fictitious into the statements.”

Eusebius also quotes Clement of Alexandria (around 180 A.D.), stating that those who had heard Peter entreated Mark to leave them a written account of the doctrine Peter had communicated orally, and that Peter authorized the gospel to be read in the churches. Origen, Clement's successor (around 225 A.D.), is credited with saying that Mark wrote his gospel as Peter explained it to him. Irenaeus confirms this tradition, stating that *“after the departure of Peter and Paul, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter.”*

The reliability of these traditions is debatable, since they do not reach us directly from the first century, but it is worth noting that they all agree on Mark's literary authorship of the Second Gospel, and all link it to Peter's preaching. Tradition does not agree perfectly on the relationship between this gospel and Peter's lifetime. Irenaeus implies that the gospel was written after Peter's death, presumably

between 65 and 66 A.D., whereas Clement and Origen maintain that Peter completed the work during his lifetime and authorized it. There can be no doubt that this gospel was written by a man who knew some members of the apostolic group and had prolonged, direct contact with their preaching.

From the preceding facts, we can draw several deductions:

1. Mark grew up in a Jewish religious environment.
2. He could have been an eyewitness to some of the events recorded in the gospel that bears his name.
3. He was a close associate of the apostolic leaders of the early church and must have been well-informed regarding the preaching of Jesus and the "good news" they propagated.
4. He was himself a participant in the work of preaching and a witness to the beginning of missionary work among the Gentiles.

Furthermore, Mark 14:51-52 mentions a certain young man who followed Jesus. No sign identifies him, nor does his inclusion at that point show any direct relevance to the narrative. As far as the account is concerned, omitting this mention would not interrupt its continuity in any way. It is difficult to resist the temptation to see in this passage a vivid reminiscence of the author, even though it plays no role in the story's main plot. Neither do the other Synoptics record this detail. If this refers to Mark, then he was an eyewitness to the final hours of Jesus' life, and posterity owes much of the memory of those hours to him.

Additionally, Mark 15:21 refers to Simon the Cyrenian, "*the father of Alexander and Rufus.*" These two men play no part in the story; they are merely mentioned, but why? Probably because the author and his readers knew them through personal relationships. If so, the date of the Gospel of Mark can be placed within a generation of the crucifixion, even granting that these two men may have been children when it occurred.

Another interesting point arises from comparing Peter's sermon in Acts 10:34-43 with this gospel. Tradition affirms that Mark served as Peter's assistant for some time, and I Peter 5:13 confirms this. The sermon recorded in Acts conforms to the outline of Mark's content. In writing his gospel, did Mark, according to tradition, recall Peter's oral preaching?

From these considerations, we can conclude that this gospel is the product of one of the young preachers of the apostolic era, who was fully acquainted with the message concerning Jesus and wrote it down as he heard it, without elaboration or embellishment of any kind. He did not attempt a biographical interpretation; he let the facts speak for themselves. If he wrote it toward the End of his career, his experience had deepened and enriched the presentation of Christ's message.

The previous discussion of the author has already uncovered much of the evidence for the gospel's date. It could hardly have been composed after 70 A.D., and indeed, much earlier, if by "composed" we mean gathering the collection and using that material without precisely publishing it. The close agreement Matthew and Luke maintain with Mark, whose gospel contains most of Mark's material, has led many to

believe that Matthew and Luke used Mark as an informational source and that Mark's document preceded the other two gospels.

Such a conclusion would lead us to believe either that Mark was written very early, or that the others were written later. However, if these gospels are three different written presentations of the apostolic message of the Lord Jesus, inspired by the Holy Spirit and drawn from the common material the apostles and their associates preached, a magnificent possibility arises: all three were drafted simultaneously. For a broader discussion on this aspect, see the section on the synoptic problem in chapter 6.

The Gospel of Mark is concise, clear, and direct, with a style well-suited to the Roman mind, which grew impatient with abstract or purely literary dissertations. Many Latinisms are found in Mark, such as *modius* instead of "almud" or "celemín" (4:21), *census* for "tributo" (12:14), *speculator* for "uno de la guardia" (6:27), *centurio* for "centurión" (15:39, 44, 45), and others. Most of these terms had Greek equivalents. It appears Mark used these Latin terms because they were more common or more familiar. This gospel places little emphasis on Jewish laws and customs, and when it mentions them, it explains them with greater amplitude than the other Synoptics. The Gospel of Mark's internal evidence fully coincides with external tradition regarding Rome as its place of publication. In any case, the Gospel of Mark aimed to evangelize the layman, endowed with the practical mindset of the Roman citizen.

Content

The Gospel of Mark is a historical narrative that presents us with a representative picture of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Fundamentally, it is not a biography because it does not discuss the protagonist's parentage, early social environment, birth, education, or family, nor does it attempt to provide information on any particular phase of his life. It gives us, in uninterrupted succession and probably in general chronological order, a series of episodes from Christ's career, with some details concerning the last week He spent on earth. It is almost entirely objective in its development. It offers few comments; the narrative stands on its own. If we discard the last twelve verses of this gospel, which many consider not to be Mark's because they do not appear in the oldest manuscripts, the gospel has a singularly abrupt ending.

The gospel is laconic, pictorial, sharp, clear, and vivid. Like a photo album dedicated to a person, Mark gives us a series of characteristic poses of Jesus, without claiming perfect continuity between one and another. However, this gospel provides a satisfactory understanding of that divine Person and His work when we gather the total impression produced by the individual episodes considered as a whole.

The gospel's theme is adequately condensed in the opening verse: "*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*" Whether these words constitute an ancient heading attached to this gospel or the author himself chose them, they serve as an appropriate introduction to all its content. The person of Christ dominates the

narrative throughout. His works are the main focus, and His death and resurrection in Jerusalem give the story an emotionally moving culmination.

The Gospel does not hide or exaggerate the supernatural element of Jesus' life. The miracles almost always address a specific human need and are performed not for mere exhibitionism, but to relieve an emergency.

There is a steady, serene development in the part that falls to Jesus toward the goal He Himself proposed, and in the surprising outcome of the resurrection (8:31, 9:31, 10:34) something much more than an implication is present. At the End, the reader is left to decide about the person whose portrait he has contemplated as a man, and yet, much more than a man.

Outline: Mark, the Gospel of the Son of God (Mark 1:1)

(Topical & Geographical Outline)

- **I. The Preparation** (Location: The Wilderness / Jordan) — Mark 1:2-13
 - The forerunner from Nazareth (1:2-8)
 - Toward the Baptism (1:9-11)
 - The Temptation in the Wilderness (1:12-13)
- **II. The Initiation of His Ministry** (Location: Galilee & Decapolis) Mark 1:14-5:43
 - Introduction and continuation in Galilee (1:14-2:12)
 - Magisterial work and subsequent ministry (2:13-4:34)
 - His authority in Decapolis (4:35-5:43)

The basic outline centers on the geographical shifts in the setting of His ministry. This gospel says little about Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem before His passion, even though He must have visited that city several times before His final visit. He did not move from Galilee and the Decapolis until the crisis of His ministry arrived. The journeys to Tiro and Sidon, or to Caesarea Philippi, were meant to withdraw from the tumult and conflict of His public ministry, to pray and reflect alone, and to instruct His disciples in truths they had perceived only obscurely.

This outline also shows a development in Mark's thought. The Greek word "*euthus*" or "*eutheos*", which translates as "then," "immediately," "straightway," or "at once," is used forty-two times—a greater number than the total times it is used in the entire rest of the New Testament. This gives the impression that, no matter how varied and detailed Jesus' ministry may have been, He was always in a hurry toward an invisible goal, glimpsed by Him but hidden from most of His contemporaries and only faintly perceived by the disciples in those rare intervals when His words illuminated their understanding.

Our outline aims to classify the material found in Mark.

The first section (1:2-13) could be called an introduction, but it is more properly a shortened account of Jesus' preparation for His great work. Mark treats this period of Jesus' life much more briefly than Matthew or Luke. It contains no genealogy; it

briefly records John's preaching, and it does not narrate the temptation in detail. This entire section focuses on Jesus' credentials, since John recommended Him, the Holy Spirit anointed Him, and the wilderness tested Him.

The second section (1:14-5:43) gives the initial impression that it is nothing more than a miscellany of representative events. It presents a series of demonstrations of Jesus' authority. The miracle of the man sick with paralysis (2:1-12), which appears at the End of a list of healings, illustrates Jesus' power to forgive sins. The debate with the Pharisees about plucking heads of grain on the Sabbath (2:23-28), along with the healing of the man with a withered hand (3:1-6), establishes Jesus' lordship over the Sabbath. Various passages mention His authority over demons (3:11, 20-30; 5:1-20).

The storm on the Sea of Galilee manifests His power over the elements of nature (4:35-41). The resurrection of Jairus' daughter demonstrates His power over death (5:21-24, 35-43). Along with these proofs of Jesus' superiority, Mark records much of His teaching, but this first part of his narrative primarily emphasizes Jesus' right to speak and act as the Son of God and as the Son of Man.

The third section (6:1-8:26) continues with the teaching and miracles of the second, but gives more space to conflict. The unbelief of His fellow citizens (6:6), the political pressure from Herod—who had executed John the Baptist and consequently would view Jesus with suspicion (6:27-29)—, the danger of popularity that could easily be confused with His divine mission on earth, turning it into demagoguery, and the traditionalism of the Pharisees (7:1-23) created pressures that Jesus had to resist. Finally, after a futile attempt to withdraw from untimely crowds (6:31-34), He arrived in Tire and Sidon, Gentile territory where He would not be as well known (7:24). But even there, they still sought His help. This section, which brings us to the peak of His ministry, sheds light and shadows upon Jesus' work. In contrast to the multitudes' bewildered greed, it presents His Compassion for them, His readiness to minister to those in need, and His wisdom in answering questions.

The fourth section (8:27-10:31) begins with Jesus' retirement to Caesarea Philippi. Like the other Synoptics, Mark sees this as the crucial turning point in Jesus' career. Jesus challenged His disciples to confess faith in Him personally (8:27). For the first time, He unveiled the necessity of His death and, later, in the transfiguration, revealed the reality of His glory. Time and again He taught them that He must die and rise again, *"but they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him"* (9:32).

The fifth section extends to the consequences of this journey for the Lord Jesus' affairs, describing the final journey toward the cross. In the teaching Jesus gave His disciples (10:32-40), in the healing of Bartimaeus—whom He mentions by name (10:46-52)—and in the popular presentation of the dramatic entry into the city (11:1-10), He demonstrated His readiness to serve God and man. In His controversies with various religious groups and in the apocalyptic discourse He gave to His disciples on the Mount of Olives, Jesus established principles of future thought and preaching that explain the outcome of His divine mission with greater clarity. He primarily

highlighted the divine perspective on human life, culminating in His return at the End of this age. Mark does not diminish the tragedy of the cross; rather, before recounting the events of the passion, he indicates that Jesus will triumphantly overcome the apparent disaster He must face.

The sixth section, which deals with the passion (14:1-15:47), does not vary much in its essential facts from the story told by the other gospels. The few days of Jesus' life are presented in strict chronological order, unlike any other period of His life. Indeed, this was the most vivid and important period. Mark's concrete, simple style intensifies the narrative's value and makes one wonder why such a wonderful person, with such tremendous authority, had to come to such an untimely End.

Two answers to this question appear in the gospel itself. One is Jesus' statement in Mark 10:45:

"For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

The tragedy presented in the gospel was an inevitable part of His service to men and of the redemption He accomplished for them. The other answer appears in the final section on the resurrection (16:1-8). The discovery of the empty tomb proved that something had happened in Joseph's garden that could not be explained on a purely natural basis. The angel's positive testimony and the women's sudden terror proved that the unexpected had occurred and that Jesus had indeed risen.

Emphasis

As we previously noted, Mark is the gospel of action. It lacks a prologue, unless you take the title as one. It has very few direct Old Testament quotations that would support a prophetic interpretation, though it contains numerous allusions and references. Of the seventy parables and parabolic expressions found in the gospels, Mark has only eighteen, though some barely occupy the space of a single phrase. Considering its size, however, Mark devotes more space to miracles than any other gospel, recording eighteen out of a possible thirty-five. Luke, for example, narrates only twenty miracles in ninety-one pages of Greek text, whereas Mark includes eighteen in fifty-three pages of the same kind of text. Clearly, Mark is more interested in facts than in theories.

Mark is the gospel of personal reactions. Throughout, the text mentions the reactions of the audiences listening to Jesus. They were "astonished" (1:27), they criticized (2:7), they were frightened (4:41), intrigued (6:14), "amazed" (7:37), and decidedly hostile (14:1). There are at least twenty-three references of this kind. The narrative presents its own appeal, as if, in the popular mind's reflection, one could see the evaluation of modern attitudes toward Jesus. Beyond these incidental notes of popular reaction, the text records many other interviews with Jesus and even observations about His personal appearance (3:5, 5:41, 7:33, 8:23, 9:27, 10:16). These brushstrokes, and others, make Mark the gospel of vividness. In it, the present tense of the verb appears 151 times in a historical Form, and the past imperfect appears many times. Still, in both cases the action is presented as a process of development rather than a simple event. Vivid phrases frequently occur:

"The spirit driveth him into the wilderness" (1:12); "They uncovered the roof" (2:4); "Unclean spirits... fell before him" (3:11); "It beat into the ship, so that it was now full" (4:37); "He commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass" (6:39). The purpose of this gospel seems to be, first and foremost, of an evangelistic character. It presents the person and work of Christ to the public as a new message, "the gospel," assuming the hearer lacks theological knowledge or Old Testament teaching.

Characters

Mark does not specialize in biographical sketches, although many of the characters in his pages are more definitely etched than those in Matthew. The young man who escaped from the soldiers in the garden (14:51-52), Alexander and Rufus (15:21), and Simon the leper (14:3) are mentioned as the author's acquaintances and, possibly, his readers'. The reference to Alexander and Rufus is particularly interesting, since it implies that Mark's readers knew them and were their contemporaries. If Rufus is the one mentioned in Romans 16:13, Mark can be dated to 56-66 A.D., further confirming it was originally written in Rome.

"And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head." — **Mark 14:3**

"And they compel one passing by, Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross." — **Mark 15:21**

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Luke views Jesus as a man and represents the third living creature. He compiled all the data regarding Jesus as a man. The evangelist Luke, author of the gospel that bears his name and the Acts of the Apostles, accompanied Paul on several of his journeys.

The Origins

Of the three Synoptic Gospels, Luke provides the most information about its own origin. Its author, who omits his name, gives a literary introduction in which he declares his intention in writing it, the methods he employed, and his relationship with his contemporaries who had attempted to do the same. This introduction (Luke 1:1-4) is the key to the book and also to the Book of Acts, if Luke and Acts are considered as a unity.

Several inferences can be deduced from the introduction, as follows:

1. **Written accounts already existed** at the same time this author lived, containing records of the life of Jesus and His work in a partial or possibly truncated Form. The author would not have written a gospel of his own accord if he had been satisfied with any of the accounts he knew.
2. **These accounts had sought a systematic arrangement** of incontrovertible facts (*"to set in order a narrative,"* 1:1).

3. **These facts were well known** by the Christian world and accepted independently of the accounts. Luke states that these things *“are most surely believed among us”* (1:1).
4. **The author felt he possessed as good information** as the others and was capable of writing, under his own responsibility, an account just as they had (*“it seemed good to me also”*).
5. **His information proceeded from competent official sources** (*“those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word,”* 1:2).
6. **He was well-informed of the facts**, either by observation or by investigation, and was undoubtedly a contemporary of the era in which the main stream of action developed, in the sense that he lived as part of the generation of those who were witnesses. The term, translated as “having had perfect understanding of all things,” is the same one used in 2 Timothy 3:10-11, where Paul says Timothy has “carefully followed” his “doctrine, manner of life, persecutions, afflictions... which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra.” This language does not imply that Timothy was present with Paul at every occasion in these cities, but that he was Paul's contemporary and learned about these things firsthand.
7. **Luke's knowledge encompasses all the main facts.** His gospel includes many details not found in the others, and many consider it the one that best represents the life of Christ.
8. **The author declares his purpose** to write diligently and in a logical arrangement. His use of the expression *“in order”* does not necessarily presuppose a chronological order; rather, it means he had a defined plan and stuck to it.
9. **The recipient of Luke was probably a man of the upper class**, addressed here by his given name, Theophilus, which literally means “lover of God” or “beloved of God.” People generally applied the epithet “most excellent” to officials or aristocrats. Perhaps he was a convert of Luke or a benefactor who took responsibility for circulating Luke's works.
10. **The recipient had already been informed orally** about Christ, perhaps through preaching he had heard; but he needed additional instruction to be grounded and convinced of the truth.
11. **The evident purpose of the author** was to give his friend a complete knowledge of the truth. From the previous deductions, we can conclude that the author possessed literary gifts and knew how to use them to present the message of Christ. But who was he?

Author

The author's identity depends on the relationship between the Third Gospel and the Book of Acts. If the same person wrote Luke and Acts, the internal evidence about the author in Acts applies to Luke, and vice versa. In Acts, the author undoubtedly participated in many of the events he describes because he frequently uses the

pronoun “we.” The “we” sections have become useful guides for determining the author’s interests, character, and possibly identity.

The first of such sections appears in the *Codex Bezae*, a 6th-century manuscript whose information is often exceptional, such as the following passage found in Acts 11:28, which states: “*And there was great rejoicing; and when we were gathered together, one of them named Agabus spoke, signifying that a great famine was going to come upon the whole world...*” Because this information appears only in the *Codex Bezae*, most scholars reject it. Still, if it is genuine, it makes the writer a member of the growing church in Antioch during Barnabas’s and Saul’s ministry.

The first universally accepted reference begins in Acts 16:10, when Paul departs from Troas on his second missionary journey. The writer accompanied him from Troas to Philippi, where the first-person plural references end with the discussion provoked by Paul’s imprisonment (16:17, 19-34). The writer was probably present in Philippi but was not arrested. The “we” sections reappear when Paul returns to Macedonia, as recorded in Acts 20:6 and following. From here on, the first-person plural is maintained throughout the rest of the book, although the writer does not appear during Paul’s imprisonment in Caesarea. However, he accompanied Paul on the voyage to Rome (27:1-2 and following) and remained with him until the narrative ends.

Luke’s relationship to Acts is close. Both documents are addressed to the same person, Theophilus. The introduction to Acts articulates perfectly with the content of Luke, affirming that “*the former account*” dealt with “*all that Jesus began both to do and teach*” (Acts 1:1). The emphasis placed on the resurrection and the forty days of His teaching ministry agrees well with the content of Luke 24. The emphasis in Acts on the Holy Spirit matches that in the Gospel. Harnack has shown that, in vocabulary and style, the accounts of the gospel and Acts agree perfectly. The argument is too long and complicated to repeat here, but the problem of unity between Luke and Acts seems duly resolved. Such facts, then, as far as they are true regarding the writer of Acts, will be equally true regarding the writer of the gospel and can legitimately be used to determine his identity.

Accordingly, the author of Luke and Acts may have been a Gentile from Antioch, converted in that city about fifteen years (at most) after Pentecost. He became a friend and associate of Paul and traveled with him on his second journey, having met him in Troas (Acts 16:10). He remained in Philippi as pastor of the Philippian church, which was distinguished by its zeal and loyalty toward its founder. Perhaps the “brother” mentioned in 2 Corinthians 8:22 refers to Luke. It is possible that he was a biological brother of Titus, who was also connected with Antioch at a very early date (Galatians 2:3). The Letter to the Corinthians suggests that this “brother” had a good reputation in Achaia and was praised in all the churches because of the gospel (2 Corinthians 8:18). If this reference is to Luke, he must have acted as Paul’s representative throughout Macedonia and Achaia, even though his headquarters were in Philippi.

When Paul returned to Philippi on his third journey, Luke reunited with him and accompanied him to Palestine. During Paul's four-year imprisonment in Jerusalem and Caesarea, Luke is not mentioned, but he could not have been far away, since he participated in the voyage to Rome and wrote the account of the shipwreck (Acts 27). He is mentioned in the letters written from prison (Colossians 4:14, Philemon 24), where he is classified among the "fellow laborers." From this point on, the data are extremely fragmentary and uncertain. He appears to have been with Paul during his final imprisonment, immediately before his death (2 Timothy 4:11). Luke was not a mere spectator looking at Christian truth from the outside, but an active preacher and missionary. He was the church's first great historian and Christianity's literary apologist. His work as Paul's associate reflected the knowledge of Christ that characterized preaching to the Gentiles.

Date and Place

Two extremes mark the boundaries of the time when the Gospel of Luke was written: it must have been written before Acts and after Christianity had developed enough to attract the attention of a Gentile investigator like Theophilus. The Book of Acts was probably composed before Paul's first imprisonment in Rome ended, as the book's sudden ending suggests the author had nothing more to say. The Gospel was therefore written after Jesus' death, and its prologue shows that many others had already tried to write gospels about the facts believed by a widespread Christian community. Perhaps 60 A.D. would serve as an intermediate date, since by then Luke would have been a Christian for at least ten years and would have traveled through Palestine, where he could have met many who knew Christ in the flesh. While Paul spent time in prison, Luke would have been investigating the background of Jesus' life, about whom he had heard much and whom Luke himself had been a missionary to.

Although later dates have been assigned to it after 60 A.D. because of the literary similarities between the gospels, the use of Mark can be explained by a common element in evangelistic preaching about Christ, as was customary in the apostolic church. Luke and Mark could have met in Antioch when John Mark first visited the city with Barnabas and Saul. Although the date of 60 A.D. cannot be fixed dogmatically, it is as satisfactory as any later date. This gospel does not indicate where it was written. It was probably written outside of Palestine, although it might have been composed in Caesarea.

All those suggestions that include Rome, Caesarea, Achaia, Asia Minor, and Alexandria are nothing more than conjectures. No primitive tradition relates to its place of origin. All that can be said is that someone wrote it somewhere in the Hellenic world, working among the Gentiles.

Content and Unique Additions

In general, the Gospel of Luke follows the main development of events recorded in Matthew and Mark, but with many exclusive additions.

The information regarding the birth of John the Baptist (1:5-25, 57-80), the birth and childhood of Jesus (1:26-56, 2:1-52), the genealogy (3:23-38), the sermon at Nazareth (4:16-30), the special call to Peter (5:8-10), six miracles (5:1-11, 7:11-17, 13:10-17, 14:1-6, 17:11-19, 22:49-51), nineteen parables, the story of the encounter with Zacchaeus (19:1-10), Herod's mockery of Jesus (23:8-12), and the appearance of Jesus after the resurrection on the road to Emmaus (24:13-35) are the primary additions found in this gospel. Luke also contains many other peculiar aspects that are too detailed and numerous to catalog.

Class 2

Outline

LUKE: THE GOSPEL OF THE SAVIOR OF MEN

- **I. The Preface** (1:1-4)
- **II. The Preparation for the Coming of the Savior** (1:5-2:52)
 - The Annunciations (1:5-56)
 - The Birth of John (1:57-80)
 - The Birth and Childhood of Jesus (2:1-52)
- **III. The Presentation of the Savior** (3:1-4:15)
 - The Ministry of John (3:1-20)
 - The Baptism (3:21-22)
 - The Genealogy (3:23-38)
 - The Temptation (4:1-13)
 - The Return to Galilee (4:14-15)
- **IV. The Ministry of the Savior** (4:16-9:50)
 - He Announces His Purpose (4:16-44)
 - The Manifestation of His Power and His Designation of Helpers (5:1-6:19)
 - Declaration of His Principles (6:20-49)
 - His Ministry of Compassion (7:1-9:17)
 - The Revelation of the Cross (9:18-50)

Structural Analysis of the Sections

Luke organizes his material around the central concept that Jesus is a member of humanity who lived the perfect, representative life of the Son of Man through the power of the Holy Spirit. This concept develops from Luke 2:11, where the child is announced as “*a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*” The first title speaks of His mission; the second and third identify Him as the Messiah of Judaism.

Luke's opening statement declares that he wrote his Gospel to give his illustrious recipient spiritual certainty about the things he had been orally instructed in. The verb “instructed” (*katēcheō*) generally implies information provided systematically rather than casually. Evidently, Luke wanted to give Theophilus an authentic foundation in this gospel and reinforce the teaching already familiar to him.

With this intent, we can conclude that Luke took special care to present his data diligently, and indeed he says so (1:3), organizing them into a structure that would make an accurate impression on the reader's mind.

The first section, which deals with the preparation for the Savior's coming, contains material not duplicated in the other gospels. Matthew declares that Jesus was born of a virgin, but recounts the story from Joseph's point of view, whereas Luke, in the second section, tells it from Mary's perspective. Matthew and Mark say nothing about the birth of John the Baptist.

The third section, which begins with the presentation of Jesus and launches Him into His full ministry, opens by connecting directly to history to show that He is not an idealized religious figure but a real participant in human history who can be located in time and space. The genealogy begins with Adam and emphasizes His human descent rather than royal lineage. The temptation event is very similar to the one Matthew records, except for the order. Luke notes that the devil "*ended every temptation*" (4:13), as if to indicate that Jesus faced all the temptations common to humanity.

Beginning the fourth section of our Savior's ministry, Luke recounts the sermon at Nazareth in which Jesus announced His relationship with the prophetic scriptures. He places the proclamation of "*the acceptable year of the Lord*" as the goal of His ministry. The subsequent biographical material is nearly identical to that found in the corresponding sections of the other Synoptics, although Luke has added many individual interviews.

The fifth section is unique to Luke. Except for a few paragraphs, very little of what Luke records between 9:51 and 18:30 appears in the other gospels. The parables of **The Good Samaritan** (10:25-37), **The Rich Fool** (12:13-21), **The Barren Fig Tree** (13:6-9), **The Places of Honor at the Wedding Feast** (14:7-14), **The Great Supper** (14:15-24), **The Lost Coin** (15:8-10), **The Prodigal Son** (15:11-32), **The Unjust Steward** (16:1-13), **The Rich Man and Lazarus** (16:19-31), and **The Pharisee and the Publican** (18:9-14) are found exclusively in Luke. Each parable or narrative demonstrates how Luke utilizes unprecedented material from the life of Christ to explain its significance to Gentile readers.

Luke's account of the passion contains no major unique sections that depart significantly from the Synoptic narrative's general pattern. However, the order of the Holy Supper (22:19-23), Jesus' warning to Simon Peter (22:31-32), the episode of His sweat becoming like drops of blood (22:43-44), the arrangement of events at the house of Caiaphas (22:63-71), the presentation of Jesus before Herod (23:4-16), Jesus' address to the women of Jerusalem (23:27-31), the repentant thief (23:39-43), all enrich the pictorial quality of the narrative without altering its development or meaning. Luke emphasizes Jesus' human suffering and Compassion to show how the Son of Man endured the cross in obedience to the Father.

His account of the resurrection is strikingly fresh and distinct. The core fact is the same as in the other gospels, but Jesus' appearance to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus seals the gospel's argument with absolute certainty. The gospel's final

words connect historical reality with doctrinal truth, showing that revelation through Christ undergirds preaching repentance and the forgiveness of sins.

Emphasis

Tradition says Luke was an artist and painted pictures for the early Christian church. Whether he ever painted on canvas is uncertain, but he was unquestionably an artist of the word. His is the most literary of the gospels; his vocabulary is rich and varied. Four beautiful songs or poems are interwoven into his writing, which have come down to modern times as hymns of the church:

- **The “Magnificat”** (1:46-55), the song Mary sang when visiting Elizabeth.
- **The “Benedictus”** (1:67-79), uttered by Zacharias at the birth of John.
- **The “Gloria in Excelsis”** (2:14), by the heavenly hosts at Jesus' birth.
- **The “Nunc Dimittis”** (2:29-32), Simeon's prayer at the dedication of the child Jesus.

The Gospel of Luke is predominantly historical, Cosmopolitan, and impartial. Luke and Acts were written to provide a spiritual analysis of the Christian church's rise and development.

Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

Luke gives marked prominence to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit; indeed, Luke has more references to the Holy Spirit than Matthew and Mark combined. The Holy Spirit empowered all the main protagonists—John the Baptist (1:15), Mary (1:35), Elizabeth (1:41), Zacharias (1:67), Simeon (2:25-26), and the Lord Jesus Himself (4:1)—for their work.

Social Focus

In this gospel, a distinct consideration is given to specific classes of people:

- **Women:** The word “woman” appears forty-three times. Luke records Mary, Elizabeth, Anna the prophetess (2:36-38), the women who traveled with Jesus (8:2-3), and those present at the cross and the tomb (23:55-56, 24:1-11).
- **Children:** Children receive greater prominence here than was customary in the annals of antiquity. Luke dedicates three chapters to the birth and infancy of Jesus and John, and records three miracles performed on young children (7:12, 8:42, 9:38).
- **The Poor and Oppressed:** Jesus appears as the champion of the humble. Seven or eight of His parables contrast poverty and wealth or emphasize economic needs (e.g., *The Rich Man and Lazarus*, *The Rich Fool*).

Characters

This gospel introduces several new historical characters: Zacharias, Elizabeth, Simeon, Anna, Zacchaeus, and Cleopas. Luke's literary presentation makes Jesus a real historical figure, not just a character in an abstract essay. Luke 19:10 serves as the book's key sentence: “*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*”

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

John corresponds to the fourth living creature: an eagle in flight. John views Jesus as God.

The Origins

The Gospel of Saint John is the most extraordinary, and perhaps the most valuable, of the four canonical gospels. It differs greatly in structure and style, though it covers the same broad development of events found in the other Gospels. It contains no parables and barely seven miracles, five of which appear nowhere else. The discourses of Jesus in this book relate primarily to His person, rather than to the ethical teaching of the kingdom. It includes many personal interviews, and Jesus' relationships with individuals are emphasized more than His general contact with the public. The gospel is markedly theological and focuses primarily on the nature of Christ and the meaning of faith in Him.

Because of the notable differences between the Synoptics and John, some have questioned its veracity. The solution is found in its origin and purpose. According to tradition, John, the son of Zebedee, the last surviving member of the apostolic group, wrote it while spending the final years of his life in Ephesus. Although this view has been persistently attacked, it remains one of the best hypotheses available to us. The earliest evidence of its existence is found in Papias, as quoted by Eusebius. In this passage, he alludes to John as one of the Lord's disciples, and to John the Elder, a disciple of the Lord and his contemporary. Eusebius deduced that the two persons were distinct individuals and cited two tombs in Ephesus, both of which were considered to belong to John at that time. Since Papias' work no longer exists, we cannot emit an independent judgment regarding the meaning of this statement; Eusebius may have misunderstood it. There is no reason an apostle cannot also call himself an elder, and Papias may have simply stated that, while most apostles did not survive to give oral testimony, one or two remained until his era as the last witnesses in the flesh to what Jesus said and did.

The theory that the Fourth Gospel was written by an unknown presbyter known as John the Elder, rather than John the Apostle, is not an approved theory. The testimony of the church fathers, from Irenaeus onward, overwhelmingly supports John's literary authorship. Clement of Alexandria (190 A.D.), Origen (around 220 A.D.), Hippolytus (around 225 A.D.), Tertullian (around 200 A.D.), and the Muratorian Fragment (around 170 A.D.) all agree that John, the son of Zebedee, wrote the fourth gospel.

Author

Several facts about the author can be deduced from the gospel itself:

- **First:** He was a Jew and was accustomed to thinking in Aramaic, even though his gospel was written in Greek. In his writing, he uses very few subordinate clauses, but he frequently inserts Hebrew or Aramaic words, which he then explains. The author was thoroughly familiar with Jewish tradition. In 1:19-28, allusion is made to the hope of the coming of the Messiah according to that tradition. He knew Jewish feelings toward the Samaritans (4:9) and their

exclusive attitude toward worship (4:20). He also knew the Jewish feasts and explained them carefully for his readers' benefit.

- **Second:** He was a Jew from Palestine and had personal knowledge of the country, especially of Jerusalem and its surroundings (9:7, 11:18, 18:1). He was familiar with the cities of Galilee (1:44, 2:1) and with the territory of Samaria (4:5, 6, 21). In each region he describes, he gives the impression of being at home.

Furthermore, he was an eyewitness to the events he records. In both 1:14 ("we beheld his glory...") and 19:35, where he speaks in the third person ("he that saw it bare record"), he says he is reporting what he personally experienced. Slight touches scattered throughout the entire gospel confirm this impression. The hour when Jesus sat on the curb of the well (4:6), the number and size of the waterpots at the wedding in Cana (2:6), the weight and value of the ointment that Mary poured upon Jesus (12:3, 5), and the details of the trial against Jesus (chapters 18 and 19) are points little related to the main subject of the narrative, but they expose the eyewitness. Who was the author? Evidently, he was with Jesus from almost the beginning of His career, because he mentions episodes that would have occurred before the opening of Christ's ministry according to the Synoptics. He must have belonged to the group of disciples mentioned in the narrative. In the final chapter, he is identified as the "beloved disciple," closely associated with Peter and very close to Jesus at the Holy Supper (13:23), the trial (18:15, 16), and the cross (19:26, 27). Only one of the Lord's closest associates could cover all these circumstances. James was killed at the beginning of church history (Acts 12:2). Peter, Thomas, and Philip are mentioned so frequently in the third person that none of them could have been the author. Although the author does not name himself, he took for granted that his readers knew who he was and would accept his authority in the matters of which he wrote. John, the son of Zebedee, remains the one presenting the best possibility.

The biography of John is fragmentary, like all other biblical biographies. He was one of the sons of Zebedee, a fisherman from Galilee (Mark 1:19-20), and of Salome, who was probably a sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus (compare Matthew 27:56, Mark 15:40, John 19:25). He grew to manhood in Galilee and was associated in the fishing business with his brother James and with Andrew and Peter. He must have belonged to the first disciples of John the Baptist, being possibly the companion of Andrew mentioned in John 1:40. If so, he accompanied Jesus on His first journey through Galilee (John 2:2) and, later, he and his companions left the fishing business to follow Jesus (Matthew 4:21-22).

He needed the counsel of Jesus as much as any of the Twelve, because he and James seemed to possess an extraordinarily passionate temperament. Jesus called them "*Boanerges*," which is, "*The sons of thunder*" (Mark 3:17). These crudenesses of temperament were sharply rebuked by Jesus, even though they might have been motivated by loyalty to Him and His work.

- **Their intolerance** is revealed in their readiness to rebuke the man casting out demons because he did not walk with them (Luke 9:49).

- **Their misplaced desire** led them to wish for fire to come down from heaven upon the Samaritan villages that refused to receive the Lord (Luke 9:52-54).
- **Their ambition** drove them to have their mother ask Jesus to grant them to sit in the primary seats of His kingdom (Matthew 20:20-28).

At the Holy Supper, John occupied a privileged position of intimacy close to Jesus (John 13:23). During the trial against Jesus, he was able to approach the courtyard of the high priest because he was known to the family of the house (18:15-16). He was a witness to the trial and death of Jesus, accepting the responsibility to protect His mother, who, before dying, commended her to his care (19:26-27). He was with Peter during the dark days that followed, and the two together were the first visitors to contemplate the newly opened sepulchre. There, upon beholding the linen clothes in the empty tomb, *“he saw, and believed”* (20:8).

The epilogue of this gospel indicates that he lived for a long time from the beginning of the Christian era. As Christ tempered his temperament and purified it from unchecked violence, John became the apostle of love, whose devotion was not surpassed by any other writer of the New Testament. The fire of his nature is revealed in the vigor of his language. John reflects Jesus' censures against unbelievers (8:44) when he calls them *“children of the devil”* (1 John 3:10). Yet, it is he himself who said:

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.” — 1 John 4:7

John is the exemplary case of a man who could have been a great sinner, and out of whom Christ made a great witness.

Date and Place

The date of the Fourth Gospel has been calculated in various ways, from 40 A.D. to much later. It cannot be later than Tatian's *Diatessaron*, in which it is already incorporated by the middle of the second century. The discovery of the **Rylands Fragment**, which preserves a piece of John 18:31-33, 37-38, demonstrates that the Gospel of John was likely in use during the first half of the second century. The best solution seems to be that John was written in Asia Minor, possibly in Ephesus, toward the end of the first century, when the church had reached sufficient maturity and there was a need for an advancement in teaching on the nature of faith. It was written in a Gentile environment, because the feasts and customs of the Jews are explained for the benefit of those who were not familiar with them (John 2:13, 4:9, 19:31).

The Three Key Words: Signs, Belief, and Life

The author's own declaration in John 20:30-31 serves as the key to the content of the gospel:

“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

Three words stand out prominently in this brief passage: **signs**, **believe** (faith), and **life**.

1. **Believing (Creáis):** This is the key to the entire gospel and appears ninety-eight times. It implies the recognition of a personal right, or serves to designate the complete surrender of the individual to Christ. John defines believing in Christ as receiving Him (1:12), becoming part of the life of the one who believes in Him.
2. **Signs (Señales):** Convinced by the signs, which were proofs of the power of the divine person of Jesus, the believer will logically proceed upon a well-founded faith. Seven public miracles are designated to illustrate different fields of His power and testify to the deity of Christ.
3. **Life (Vida):** This is the total of all that the believer receives in salvation. It includes a new nature, a new consciousness, a living relationship with the environment, and constant growth. Christ is presented as the model of this life.

Class 4

Outline

JOHN: THE GOSPEL WRITTEN THAT YE MIGHT BELIEVE

- **I. Prologue (1:1-18)**
 - Declaration of the core theme: Believing.
- **II. Stage of Early Reflections: Presenting the Object of Faith (1:19-4:54)**
 - The testimony of the declarations of John the Baptist (1:19-51).
 - The testimony of the works of Jesus (2:1-22).
 - The testimony of the words of Jesus (2:23-54).
- **III. Stage of Controversy: The Sources of Faith and Unbelief (5:1-6:71)**
 - Presented in action (5:1-18).
 - Presented in argumentation (5:19-47).
 - Presented in demonstration (6:1-21).
 - Presented in peroration (6:22-71).
- **IV. Stage of Conflict (7:1-11:53)**
 - The clash between faith and unbelief: Description of the conflict (7:1-8:59).
 - With the brothers of Jesus (7:1-9).
 - With the populace (7:10-52).
 - With those who caught the woman in adultery (7:53-8:11).
 - With the Pharisees and the Jews (8:12-59).
 - Cases illustrating the conflict: The man born blind (9:1-41).
 - The discourse on the Good Shepherd (10:1-21).
 - Argumentations (10:22-42).
 - The resurrection of Lazarus (11:1-53).

- **V. Stage of Crisis: Believers and Unbelievers Declare Themselves** (11:54-12:36a)
- **VI. Stage of Intimate Conversations: The Strengthening of Faith** (12:36b-17:26)
 - Preliminary arrangements (12:36b-13:30).
 - Conversation with His disciples (13:31-16:33).
 - Conversation with the Father in prayer (17:1-26).
- **VII. Stage of Consummation: The Victory over Unbelief** (18:1-20:29)
 - The betrayal (18:1-27).
 - The trial before Pontius Pilate (18:28-19:16).
 - The crucifixion (19:17-37).
 - The burial (19:38-42).
 - The resurrection (20:1-29).
- **Epilogue: The Responsibilities of the Believer** (21:1-25)

Structural Analysis of the Sections

The structure of the Gospel of John is so clear that a reader can hardly miss it. From beginning to End, it consistently maintains the theme of believing. Furthermore, the gospel does not attempt to impose a dominant, artificial organization on the facts. The inspired writer has chosen specific episodes and teachings that represent the character and development of God's revelation in Christ, arranging them to draw the reader, like a rising spiritual tide, toward an active confession of faith in Christ.

The **Prologue** (1:1-18) begins by using the concept of *the Word* (Logos) to present the person of Christ. This term differs from those used in the other gospels because it does not denote any single, localized religious background. Christ is Jewish; Lord is Gentile; Jesus is human; but *the Word* is philosophical. In this way, John turns the central figure of his gospel into a universal figure—the incarnation of the Eternal Reason, God Himself, who came from God and reveals God just as a son reveals his father. Those who receive Him must understand this (1:12), and the conflict between those who receive Him and those who reject Him is compared to the struggle between light and darkness.

The **Stage of Early Reflections** (1:19-4:54) presents the person of the Word made flesh as He appeared to His contemporaries and how He was received by them. First, He is proclaimed through the testimony of His forerunner, John, and in His dealings with John's disciples. His essential mission, "*the Lamb of God*" (1:29), and His method—which appeals to the needs and desires of those who would be His followers—connect Him with preceding history and revelation. He used both the preaching of John and the Old Testament Scriptures to establish His divine position. In the works He performed, He demonstrated His natural power over things, men, and institutions (2:1-22). The interviews that followed were vivid manifestations of His sufficiency to satisfy all men: the wise and gentle Jewish teacher Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman of light character and quick tongue, and the persistent nobleman from Galilee—likely a Gentile—were all directed toward faith in Jesus by different arguments and distinct methods.

The **Controversia del Sábado** (The Sabbath Controversy) erupted as soon as Jesus presented Himself publicly, since when He appealed to men to believe in Him, many refused. He never demanded blind or irrational faith, but was always careful to appeal to facts, clearly defining the points of discussion regarding faith and unbelief. The healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda precipitated the **Stage of Controversy** (5:1-6:71), precisely because the miracle was performed on the Sabbath. Jesus indicated that His action was a simple example of what His Father continually did, and in this way, tacitly declared deity as His own prerogative. In the discussion that followed (5:19-47), He argued in favor of the faith He proclaimed based on five different testimonies: His own, that of His forerunner, that of the Father, that of the wonders performed by Him, and that of Scripture. The miracles of chapter six, according to John, were directed primarily to the good of His disciples to awaken in them their surrender to faith. These miracles and the discourses that followed are closely bound together, since the discourse merely amplifies the truth established in the miracles. The demand for faith is strong throughout this stage, as if Jesus wanted His disciples to surrender completely to Him before the fire of controversy separated them.

The **Stage of Conflict** (7:1-11:53) drives the tendency manifested in the previous Stage of Controversy toward a logical crisis. The growing, yet still hesitant, faith of the disciples is placed in sharp contrast with the rigid cynicism of Jesus' brothers, the fluctuating loyalty of the misguided multitude, and the venomous opposition of the Jewish leaders.

Jesus' own evaluation of this struggle appears in the story of the blind man, where He expresses the need to do the works of God. At the same time, He has the opportunity, and, concerning the resurrection of Lazarus, considers it the supreme test of faith and the ultimate demonstration of His power. The discursive material between these two miracles in chapter ten constitutes Jesus's most extensive public declaration of His extraordinary mission. There He declares the purpose of His death as clearly as He did in His declaration to the disciples at Caesarea Philippi according to the Synoptics. He predicts the outcome of the conflict: *"I lay down my life, that I might take it again"* (10:17).

In the **Stage of Crisis** (11:54-12:36a), the tensions created by this struggle surface. Jesus withdrew from Jerusalem and its surroundings to Ephraim to stay outside the storm's center. His friends' feelings become notably public through the family of Bethany, who serve a meal in His honor (12:1-2). The multitude of pilgrims in Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover enthusiastically proclaimed Him (12:12-13). Jesus Himself understood that death was real and suspended His public contact (12:36). The decisive factor in His life would not be the people's vote, but what God had already appointed.

Up to this point, Jesus' ministry was public; from here on, it developed privately.

The **Stage of Intimate Conversations** (12:36b-17:26) encompasses the final teaching Jesus gives the disciples after the Holy Supper, as well as His prayer to the Father. As the disciples prepare for the shock of the cross and He declares before the Father that He has finished His work, the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus concludes.

The **Stage of Consummation** (18:1-20:31) fully presents the fulfillment of the two opposing principles of faith and unbelief. In the betrayal and crucifixion, unbelief stood unmasked. The weakness of Peter, the treachery of Judas, the rancorous malice of the priests, and the cowardice of Pilate show how unbelief reaches its final End. On the other hand, the constancy of the beloved disciple and the women, and the generous action of Joseph and Nicodemus, show how even an imperfect, poorly instructed faith can remain loyal despite confusion and danger. Consequently, the resurrection was the final justification of faith and the supreme vindication of the revelation made through Jesus, the Son of God.

Emphasis

The Gospel of John presents many unique features that strengthen its main theme. The demands of Jesus are presented in **seven primary “I AM” (YO SOY) declarations**:

1. **I AM the bread of life.** (6:35)
2. **I AM the light of the world.** (8:12, 9:5)
3. **I AM the door of the sheep.** (10:7)
4. **I AM the good shepherd.** (10:11, 14)
5. **I AM the resurrection, and the life.** (11:25)
6. **I AM the way, the truth, and the life.** (14:6)
7. **I AM the true vine.** (15:1)

John insists on Jesus' personal relationship with man. He records **twenty-seven personal interviews**, some extensive and others brief. In moments like the trial before Pilate (18:28-19:16), Jesus' personal interest in Pilate and His desire to lead him to recognize His divine demands are far more evident than the historical trial itself.

The Johannine Vocabulary

The Johannine vocabulary is so singular that even a verse or two can be easily identified out of context. Key terms recur constantly, presenting central truths from different angles. Some terms are figurative or have a technical meaning: *“life,” “light,” “darkness,” “work,” “world,” “believe,”* and *“hour.”* Others are abstract with philosophical content: *“truth,” “true,” “hatred,” “receive”* (to accept), *“love,” “bear,” “send,” “beginning,” “know,” “glorify,” “testify,” “witness,” “abide,”* and *“the Father.”*

Deity and Humanity

The Gospel of John strongly insists on the **divinity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God**, directly affirming His divine prerogatives: *“the Word was God”* (1:1); *“My Father and I are one”* (10:30); *“Before Abraham was, I am”* (8:58); *“he that hath seen me*

hath seen the Father" (14:9); and Thomas' exclamation, *"My Lord and my God"* (20:28).

At the same time, it places a profound emphasis on Jesus' humanity. He grew weary (4:6), was thirsty (4:7), impatient (6:26), reflective (6:67), stern (8:44), sorrowful (11:35), appreciative (12:7), troubled (12:27), loving (13:1), loyal (18:8), and courageous (18:23). To His contemporaries He was *"the man called Jesus"* (9:11); for those who lived with Him, He became *"the Son of God"* (6:69).

Purpose

The purpose of this gospel is apologetic, designed for those with philosophical inclinations who sought an answer to Philip's request: *"Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us"* (14:8). It was written with the conscious intent to complete the existing written accounts in the Synoptic Gospels. John adds personal details, explaining, for example, how the foot-washing scene in the upper room addressed the disciples' question, "Which of them should be accounted the greatest?" as recorded in Luke 22:24.

Class 5

THE BOOK OF ACTS

The Establishment of the Church

There is a tremendous gap between the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ and the rise of the church as part of the great river of history. How could it happen that the followers of Jesus, who were nothing more than unknown provincials from Galilee and Judea, became global figures? What changed that timidity that caused them to deny Him and flee at the hour of the crucifixion, transforming it into a courage that turned them into apologetic interpreters of a new faith? How could those preachers, who were recognizably *"unlearned and ignorant men"* (Acts 4:13), make such an impact on the world, in which they are considered creators of an entirely new culture that remodeled the face of our entire Western civilization?

What is the origin of the theological truths contained in the New Testament and preached by the early missionaries? What relationship does the teaching found in the epistles maintain with that found in the gospels? How could it happen that a movement which began among Jews, centered around a Jewish Messiah, and found its foundation in the Jewish Scriptures, became a religion adopted by such a large number of Gentiles as seen today?

These and other similar questions are answered in the Book of Acts, the only link that exists between the ministry and teaching of Christ, on one hand, and Christianity on the other, just as it appears in full bloom within the epistles of Paul and those of other New Testament writers.

Informational Source: The Acts

The Book of Acts does not constitute a unit by itself, since it was evidently conceived as the continuation of Luke. The author speaks of *“the former treatise”* (Acts 1:1), and his dedication to Theophilus indicates its connection with the gospel dedicated to the same person. The summary of that first treatise, as given in Acts (1:1-2), is in perfect agreement with the content of Luke, resuming the narrative from the point where it was suspended in the Gospel of Luke. There is no reasonable doubt that Acts and Luke are two volumes of the same work. They were designed to fulfill the same general purpose of confirming personal faith, providing a historical and intelligible account regarding the revelation of God to men through the personal career of Christ as well as the operation of His church. Historically and spiritually, Acts answers these problems.

Outline of the Book of Acts

1. **Introduction** (1:1-11)
2. **The Origin of the Church: In Jerusalem** (1:12-8:3)
3. **The Transition Period: In Samaria** (8:4-11:18)
4. **The Expansion Reaches the Gentiles: The Pauline Mission in Antioch and the Empire** (11:19-21:16)
5. **The Imprisonment and Defense of Paul: In Caesarea and Rome** (21:17-28:31)

Structural Analysis of the Development

The Book of Acts is logically outlined according to the geographical development indicated in Acts 1:8: *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”*

The first section, following the introduction, deals with the beginnings in Jerusalem. The second gives a glimpse of the work in Samaria, on the coastal plain, and in Caesarea. The final two sections recount the advance of the gospel message through the cities of the Mediterranean world, ending in Rome, the capital. The church's geographical expansion resembled the waves of a tide that, after each recession, rise higher and venture farther and farther beyond the shore.

The Book of Acts can also be outlined based on data related to the church's development. Notes on the growth of spiritual life in number and quality appear in 2:47, 5:14, 6:7, 9:31, 12:24, 16:5, and 19:20, showing that the Book of Acts tracks the progressive development of the Christian group. In the final part of the book, from 19:20 to the End, the emphasis shifts from the general to the personal, giving greater importance to Paul's life as an individual than to the church as an institution.

Acts can also be outlined by taking the individuals who appear in it as a basis.

Chapters 1 through 5 center on Peter; chapters 6 and 7 center on Stephen; chapters 8 through 12 introduce various personalities, three of whom stand out: Barnabas, Philip, and Saul of Tarsus; and from chapter 13 to the End, Paul becomes the dominant figure.

Historical data yield a profound comparison between Peter and Paul: both were leaders, one among the Jews and the other among the Gentiles. Peter worked for a long time in Jerusalem, while Paul worked in the Gentile world.

Parallelisms Between Peter and Paul

Divine Actions and Core Doctrines	Apostle Peter	Apostle Paul
Comprehensive Sermons	The Discourse on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-40)	The Discourse in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:16-42)
Miracles of Healing	Healed a lame man at the Temple gate (Acts 3:1-10)	Healed a lame man at Lystra (Acts 14:8-10)
Sudden Divine Judgment	Sentenced Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)	Struck Elymas the sorcerer with blindness (Acts 13:6-11)
Supernatural Deliverance	Miraculously released from prison in Jerusalem (Acts 5:19-21, 12:1-11)	Miraculously released from prison in Philippi (Acts 16:19-30)
Pneumatological Focus	Insisted upon the work of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38)	Insisted upon the work of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:2-6)
The Core Doctrine	Made the Resurrection the center of preaching (Acts 2:24-36; 3:15, 26; 4:2; 5:30; 10:40-41)	Made the Resurrection the center of preaching (Acts 13:30-37; 17:3, 18, 31; 24:15, 21; 25:19; 26:8, 23)

Just as the first was the leader of the rising church in Jerusalem, the other was the founder of the early Gentile churches. There is, however, no indication that any antagonism existed between them, nor was the work of each restricted to a single class of hearers. Peter brought the gospel to the house of the Gentile Cornelius, and Paul spoke to the Jews on every occasion presented to him.

The credibility of Acts has been frequently disputed, but it has never been successfully combated. There are difficulties that must be resolved to harmonize its chronology with that of the epistles, and not all historical allusions found in Acts can be confirmed, due to the fact that in many cases we lack the necessary data. In these cases, however, whenever favorable archaeological facts and corresponding literary data have been found, Acts has stood vindicated. John Knox, who thinks that *“there is plenty of reason to doubt some details”* of Acts, admits that *“there is sufficient reason to trust the historical essence of the final chapters.”*

Class 6

The Transition and Missionary Expansion

The unquestionable fact that Luke wished to write an explanatory treatise on the development of Christian teaching and mission implies that he was fully aware of the far-reaching importance of Christianity. He was not a mere chronicler who entries insubstantial events tediously on paper. He possessed the instincts of a historian and presented his data by arranging them in accordance with the development and continuity of the theme that absorbed him. That theme was the growth of the church, particularly during its transition from Judaism toward Christian Gentility. In this transition, the historian took an active part, as indicated by his use of “we,” and he was well qualified to deal with the subject about which he wrote.

The Book of Acts, therefore, does not pretend to be an exhaustive narrative of all the events that took place during the growth of the early church. It says nothing about its expansion south or east of Palestine, although Christians must have existed in Egypt and Syria from the earliest date. Believers were in Damascus before Paul's conversion, but we have no information about the church's development in that city. The narrative stream of the Book of Acts primarily concerns the missionary work that expanded outward from Jerusalem.

This transition was accomplished through a series of crucial, step-by-step developments that Luke carefully highlights:

- **The Martyrdom of Stephen:** The persecution that arose after his death served as the catalyst that scattered the believers beyond the walls of Jerusalem.
- **The Ministry of Philip in Samaria:** This marked the breaking of the first cultural barrier, carrying the gospel message to a people traditionally despised by the Jews.
- **The Conversion of Cornelius:** Through Peter's divine vision and his subsequent visit to Caesarea, the Holy Spirit formally opened the door of faith directly to the Gentiles without requiring them to become Jewish proselytes first.
- **The Establishing of the Church in Antioch:** This city rapidly became the great strategic center for the international expansion of the faith, serving as the official launching pad for the systematic evangelization of the Roman Empire.

The Pauline Mission and the Legal Defenses

The narrative stream of the Book of Acts shifts dynamically as Antioch becomes the sending center for international evangelization. Saul of Tarsus, alongside Barnabas and later companions, launches a systematic expansion through the Roman Empire's strategic provinces.

The Council of Jerusalem and Geographical Expansion

A critical turning point occurs during this expansion regarding the theological status of Gentile converts. The Council of Jerusalem formally resolves that Gentiles do not need to submit to Jewish ceremonial laws, establishing a theological consensus that unifies the church and accelerates its global reach. Paul's subsequent missionary journeys carry the gospel across Asia Minor and into Europe, establishing vital Christian communities in cities such as Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, and Ephesus.

The Imprisonment and Legal Defenses

The final major section shifts from an organizational focus to a deeply personal, legal narrative that tracks Paul's arrest and trials. Following his arrest in Jerusalem, the narrative documents his tactical legal defenses before various political and religious authorities:

- **Defense before the Sanhedrin:** Exercising his understanding of Jewish theological factions to address the resurrection of the dead.
- **Defense before Governor Felix in Caesarea:** Presenting a reasoned explanation of his faith and conduct under Roman law.
- **Defense before Governor Festus and King Agrippa:** Appealing directly to Caesar as a Roman citizen, forcing his transfer to the capital of the Empire.

The book reaches its historical culmination with Paul's arrival in Rome. Despite being under house arrest, the narrative concludes triumphantly, showing the apostle preaching the kingdom of God and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

THE PAULINE EPISTLES

The Doctrine of Justification by Faith

The epistles of the Apostle Paul form a foundational pillar of Christian theology, serving as practical and doctrinal commentary on the historical accounts of the gospels. While the gospels record what Jesus began to do and teach in the flesh, the epistles reveal what the risen Christ continues to perform and establish through the Holy Spirit within His church.

The Nature and Purpose of the Epistles

Paul's writings are not systematic theological textbooks composed in academic isolation. They are genuine, living letters written to specific Christian communities and individuals addressing real-world operational challenges, theological crises, and spiritual needs. Despite their occasional nature, the Holy Spirit utilized them to crystallize the core doctrines of the Christian faith for all subsequent generations.

Chronological Order and Classifications

To understand the historical development of Paul's thought and missionary work, his thirteen epistles are traditionally classified into four distinct chronological groups: The Pauline epistles, also known as the Epistles of Paul or Letters of Paul, are the thirteen New Testament books attributed to Paul the Apostle, although the

authorship of some is disputed. These epistles include some of the earliest extant Christian documents.

Written during his second missionary journey from Corinth, focusing heavily on the second coming of Christ and pastoral encouragement.

The Pauline epistles, also known as the Epistles of Paul or Letters of Paul, are the thirteen New Testament books attributed to Paul the Apostle. However, the authorship of some is disputed. These epistles include some of the earliest extant Christian documents.

The Early Epistles

Paul the Apostle

Written during his second missionary journey from Corinth, focusing heavily on Christ's second coming and pastoral encouragement.

- *1 & 2 Thessalonians*

The Major Epistles

Paul the Apostle

Written during his third missionary journey, these letters offer the most comprehensive and robust defenses of the core gospel message against legalistic distortions.

- *Galatians*, *1 & 2 Corinthians*, *Romans*

The Prison Epistles

Written during his first imprisonment in Rome, exalting the supreme cosmic lordship of Jesus Christ over the cosmos and the church.

- *Ephesians*, *Philippians*, *Colossians*, *Philemon*

The Pastoral Epistles

Written after his release and during his final imprisonment, these letters provide practical administrative and spiritual guidelines for church leaders.

- *1 & 2 Timothy*, *Titus*

Through this diverse collection of letters, Paul systematically unfolds the cross's theological implications, establishing a framework in which faith shifts from a localized Jewish expectation to a universal reality accessible to all nations.

The Theology of Justification by Faith

The doctrine of justification by faith represents the central gravitational core of Pauline soteriology, formulated with absolute clarity within the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians. Paul argues that a person is declared righteous before a

holy God not through legalistic compliance or external rituals, but solely through faith in the legal and spiritual work Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross.

Core Theological Pillars in Romans and Galatians

- **The Universality of Sin:** Paul establishes that both Jews and Gentiles are structurally trapped under the dominion of sin, rendering human legalism completely obsolete for salvation. *“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23).
- **The Legal Character of Justification:** The Greek term used by Paul (*dikaion*) carries a judicial meaning: God does not make the sinner inherently perfect in an instant; rather, He legally declares them righteous, fully acquitting them of spiritual debt because Christ paid the penalty.
- **The Object of Faith:** Faith is not a generic positive mindset; it is the specific vehicle that hooks the believer to the person and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Salvation is by grace through faith alone.

Comparative Scriptural Framework

The following structural table demonstrates how Paul's theological exposition connects organically with the foundational principles established by Jesus Christ in the historical records of the gospels:

Theological Dimension	Synoptic Foundation (Gospels)	Pauline Integration (Epistles)
The Nature of Righteousness	Exceeds external legalism and pharisaic ritualism (Matthew 7:23-24).	Received as a divine gift apart from the works of the law (Romans 3:21-22).
The Legal Acquittal	Illustrated in the tax collector who went home justified by throwing himself on God's mercy (Luke 18:14).	Explicitly defined as being justified freely by His grace through redemption (Romans 5:1).
The Cost of Redemption	Son of Man came to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).	Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us (Galatians 3:13).
The Universal Access	Commission to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19).	There is no difference between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is rich unto all (Romans 10:12).

Through this comprehensive framework, Paul elevates justification from a controversial debate against legalistic factions into a global, pastoral reality. This standard gives the believer absolute spiritual certainty, assuring them that their standing before God rests on the unshakeable righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Pastoral Application and the Maturity of the Church

The doctrine of justification by faith is not merely a legal or abstract theorem; it is a foundational pastoral reality that directly shapes the spiritual maturity and structural health of the local church. When a Christian community deeply internalizes that its standing before God rests entirely on the unshakeable righteousness of Jesus Christ, its entire culture shifts from legalistic performance to genuine spiritual growth.

1. Overcoming the Fear of Rejection

One of the greatest spiritual barriers to church maturity is the psychological and spiritual fear of rejection. Legalism teaches individuals that their value depends strictly on their performance, creating anxiety, comparison, and hidden sin.

- **The Theological Remedy:** Justification destroys this fear by providing absolute spiritual certainty. Because the believer is fully accepted in Christ, they can serve without the desperate need to prove themselves to others.
- **Pastoral Impact:** This transforms the local church from a competitive platform into a safe greenhouse where leaders can be trained, restored, and deployed into the mission field without the fear of failure.

2. Nurturing Spiritual Maturity

True church maturity comes when believers move from spiritual infancy—easily swayed by external rituals and legalistic demands—to a mature understanding of their position in Christ.

- **Identity in Christ:** Maturity requires anchoring the believer's everyday identity in the completed work of the cross. A secure leader is a servant leader, reflecting Christ's character as shown in the Gospels.
- **Unity in Diversity:** Justification establishes that because everyone enters the kingdom via the same door of grace, there is no room for spiritual pride or ethnic divisions. It binds diverse groups into a single, cohesive body under Christ's lordship.

3. Practical Implications for Leadership and Ministry

For pastors and church administrators, preaching and operating under the banner of justification provides the ultimate framework for training workers:

- **Motivation for Service:** Ministry service is no longer driven by guilt, fear, or a desire to earn God's favor, but springs forth as a spontaneous overflow of gratitude and love.
- **Restoration Framework:** It equips leaders with a powerful framework for counseling and restoration, pointing broken individuals back to their unalterable legal standing before God rather than their temporary failures.

- **Healthy Governance:** Church administration shifts its focus from behavioral modification and rigid control to heart transformation and spiritual deployment, building a sustainable and flourishing ministry.

STUDY GUIDE & REVIEW QUESTIONS

Deepening the Doctrine of Justification by Faith

This section is designed to assist students and leaders in reviewing, evaluating, and applying the critical theological concepts examined throughout Class 6.

I. Theological Review Questions

1. **Definitions:** According to Paul's exposition in Romans and Galatians, what is the exact judicial meaning of the Greek term *dikaion* (to justify), and how does it differ from a mere behavioral modification?
2. **The Problem of Human Legalism:** Based on Romans 3:23, explain why legalistic compliance and external ritualism are structurally obsolete for achieving a righteous standing before a holy God.
3. **The Object of Faith:** Synthesize the core differences between a generic positive mindset and the specific Pauline definition of faith regarding the person and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
4. **Gospel Foundations:** Identify and discuss at least two historical events or parables in the Synoptic Gospels (e.g., Luke 18:14, Mark 10:45) that serve as the foundational bedrock for Paul's subsequent doctrine of justification.

II. Practical Leadership Scenarios

- **Scenario A (Counseling Legalism):** A ministry worker in your church is burnt out, confessing that they feel they must constantly perform and maintain a flawless record to be accepted by God and the leadership team. How would you apply the doctrine of justification to counsel them and restore their spiritual security?
- **Scenario B (Church Governance):** A local congregation is facing internal divisions because certain factions are attempting to enforce rigid, external traditions on new believers as a requirement for full fellowship. What structural steps would you take, using Paul's letter to the Galatians, to protect the unity of the church?

DEVOTIONAL APPLICATION

Living Unto Righteousness Without Fear

The ultimate goal of theological instruction is not merely accumulating intellectual knowledge, but thoroughly transforming the heart under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Internalizing your legal acquittal before the throne of God alters how you walk out your everyday life:

- **Resting in Complete Acceptance:** Because you have been justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, you are no longer a slave to the fear of rejection. Your identity is permanently secure.

- **Service Fueled by Gratitude:** Good works are not the root of your salvation, but they are the inevitable, beautiful fruit of it. Ministry service shifts from a heavy duty driven by guilt into a joyful overflow of love for the Savior.
- **Extending Grace to Others:** A leader who truly understands how deeply they have been forgiven and justified becomes a powerful instrument of grace, leading others with a spirit of restoration, humility, and absolute pastoral integrity.

Class 7

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The Consummation of the Kingdom

The Book of Revelation stands as the New Testament canon's climactic masterpiece. While the gospels document Christ's first coming in humility and service, and the epistles unfold the present operations of His grace, Revelation pulls back the cosmic veil to showcase the triumphant, ultimate return of the King of Kings in absolute glory and final judgment.

The Historical Context on Patmos

The book was written during a period of fierce imperial persecution against the early church, traditionally dated to the End of Emperor Domitian's reign (around 95 A.D.). The Apostle John, the last surviving member of the original Twelve, found himself exiled to the barren island of Patmos *“for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ”* (Revelation 1:9).

Far from a sign of defeat, this isolation became a divine laboratory where the Holy Spirit gave John a series of panoramic visions to encourage a suffering church and prove that earthly empires are temporary, but the kingdom of God is eternal.

The Four Major Schools of Interpretation

To approach the complex symbolic and prophetic framework of Revelation, biblical scholarship traditionally utilizes four distinct hermeneutical viewpoints:

1. **The Preterist School:** Views the prophecies as having been largely fulfilled in the early centuries of church history, specifically focusing on the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and the collapse of the pagan Roman Empire.
2. **The Historicist School:** Interprets the book as a continuous, chronological forecast of church history from the first century until the second coming of Christ, identifying specific symbols with historical events like the rise of European empires or the Reformation.
3. **The Futurist School:** Assumes that the vast majority of the book (from chapter 4 onward) describes events that will take place in the immediate future preceding and following the return of Christ, focusing on the final tribulation, the millennium, and the new creation.
4. **The Idealist (or Spiritualist) School:** Views the book not as a timeline of specific historical events, but as a symbolic, timeless portrayal of the ongoing cosmic struggle between good and evil, assuring believers of God's ultimate victory in every age.

The Heavenly Victory (The Vision of Revelation 4)

The immediate narrative response to earthly persecution is a breathtaking glimpse into the sovereign control of God. John is invited through an open door into the heavenly throne room:

"And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind... And they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." — **Revelation 4:6, 8**

This vision establishes that despite the apparent chaos on earth under tyrannical rulers, the throne of God remains completely stable, unshakeable, and surrounded by perpetual worship. The four living creatures represent creation's full acknowledgment of the Almighty's absolute holiness, eternal sovereignty, and redemptive purpose.

Theological Analysis and the Symbolism of the Living Creatures

The profound apocalyptic imagery found in the Book of Revelation does not exist in a theological vacuum; rather, it represents the definitive climax and fulfillment of Old Testament prophetic structures, specifically the visions recorded by the Prophet Ezekiel. When John beholds the four living creatures around the heavenly throne, he is witnessing the ultimate realization of what Ezekiel saw in shadow. Spiritually and historically, these four distinct faces represent the four evangelists, each unveiling a specific, vital dimension of Jesus Christ's person and cosmic ministry.

The Four Spiritual Dimensions of Christ

- **The Face of the Ox (Mark — The Faithful Servant):** Mark corresponds directly to the second living creature—an ox, an animal universally considered for labor and sacrificial service. This symbolism highlights Jesus as the ultimate Servant who obeys His Father's commands without hesitation. His authority is hidden in humility and expressed through action, showing leaders that true greatness in the kingdom is found in becoming a servant to all.
- **The Face of the Lion (Matthew — The Messianic King):** Matthew is represented by the lion, the undisputed king among animals. This symbolism emphasizes Jesus' royal lineage and majestic authority as the long-awaited Messiah. His gospel traces His genealogy back to David and Abraham, establishing His legal right to the throne and presenting His teachings as the sovereign decrees of the King of Kings.
- **The Face of the Man (Luke — The Compassionate Savior):** Luke views Jesus through the third living creature—the face of a man. This dimension focuses on Christ's authentic, perfect humanity. Luke meticulously compiled the data showing Jesus sharing in human experiences, demonstrating deep sympathy for the poor, the marginalized, and the broken, and highlighting His agony as a real man submitting to the Father's will.
- **The Face of the Eagle (John — The Divine Word):** John corresponds to the fourth living creature—an eagle in flight. The eagle represents the heavenly, soaring high above the earthly realm. John exalts Jesus' absolute deity and

pre-existence, defending His divinity against all opposition. His focus is completely vertical, beginning with the eternal reality that the Word was God and became flesh to reveal the Father.

The Unity of the Fourfold Revelation

Evangelist	Living Creature Symbol	Primary Christological Focus	Operational Theme
Matthew	The Lion	The Messianic King	Sovereignty and Royalty
Mark	The Ox	The Obedient Servant	Service and Sacrifice
Luke	The Man	The Ideal Human / Savior	Compassion and Universality
John	The Eagle	The Incarnate God	Divinity and Eternal Life

By blending these four dimensions, the Book of Revelation gives the church a complete, multifaceted portrait of Jesus Christ. He is not merely a historical figure or a distant theological concept; He is simultaneously the King who rules, the Servant who carries, the Man who understands, and the God who redeems. Internalizing this complete symbolism allows the local church to worship with full understanding, anchoring its ministries in the absolute fullness of who Christ is.

The Role of the Martyrs and the Church Amidst the Judgments

The theological framework of the Book of Revelation does not position the Church as a passive spectator, but as an active, suffering, and ultimately triumphant participant in the unfolding cosmic drama. As the divine seals break, the trumpets sound, and the bowls of wrath pour out, the text explicitly reveals the profound strategic role the martyrs and the global Church play amid these historical and future judgments.

1. The Cry of the Martyrs Under the Altar

A crucial focal point occurs during the opening of the fifth seal, where John beholds a stunning heavenly reality regarding those who gave their lives for the faith:

"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" — Revelation 6:9-10

- **The Altar of Sacrifice:** The souls are located directly under the heavenly altar, indicating that God views the martyrdom of His saints not as a tragic defeat, but as a holy, precious sacrifice.

- **The Driving Force of Judgment:** Far from being forgotten, their persistent prayers and cries for divine justice act as a spiritual catalyst that accelerates the final judgments of God against oppressive earthly systems.

2. The Overcoming Church: Victory Through Testimony

The ultimate victory of the Church over the deceptive power of the adversary is not achieved through physical warfare or political dominance, but through a specific, three-fold spiritual blueprint:

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." — **Revelation 12:11**

- **The Blood of the Lamb:** The unshakeable legal foundation of their victory, rooted in the finished and justifying work of Christ on the cross.
- **The Word of Their Testimony:** The active, fearless proclamation of the gospel truth before hostile authorities and empires.
- **A Sacrificial Love:** A deep, mature commitment to Christ that considers physical life secondary to absolute spiritual loyalty, completely eradicating the fear of rejection or death.

3. The Present and Future Comfort for the Saints

Throughout the intense tribulation, the Holy Spirit constantly provides words of absolute reassurance to sustain the local church's patience and faith. John is commanded to record a perpetual blessing for those who stand firm:

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." — **Revelation 14:13**

For pastors and global leaders, this structural emphasis provides the ultimate pastoral tool: it teaches believers that suffering under tyrannical systems is temporary, but the rewards of faithfulness are eternal. Works done out of love for the Savior lead them directly into the new creation, securing an everlasting inheritance.

THE FINAL STRUCTURE OF THE CONSUMMATED KINGDOM

The grand narrative arc of the entire New Testament reaches its definitive, eternal architecture in the final chapters of the Book of Revelation. The temporary trials, kingdoms, and conflicts of history melt away to reveal the permanent, structural reality of the fully consummated Kingdom of God.

1. The New Heaven and the New Earth

John beholds the complete renewal of the cosmic order, where the structural damage of human sin is entirely removed:

- **The Removal of the Old Order:** The former heaven and earth pass away, and the sea—traditionally a symbol of chaos, separation, and cosmic rebellion in apocalyptic literature—is no more.
- **The Tabernacle of God:** The supreme structural characteristic of the consummated kingdom is absolute proximity. God no longer dwells in hidden temples or distant heavens; His tabernacle is permanently anchored among men. *"He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God"* (Revelation 21:3).

2. The New Jerusalem: The Eternal Architecture

The capital of the consummated kingdom is described with hyper-specific architectural symmetries, representing absolute perfection, security, and the gathering of God's global people:

- **The Foundation and Gates:** Built upon twelve foundations bearing the names of the twelve apostles, with twelve gates bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. This showcases the perfect structural unity of the Old and New Covenants.
- **The Cubical Perfection:** The city is measured as a perfect cube, echoing the dimensions of the Holy of Holies in the ancient tabernacle. The entire city has become the localized, unshakeable presence of God.
- **The Source of Life:** Running through the center of the city is the pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, flanked by the tree of life. This marks the definitive restoration of paradise lost in Eden.

REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR REVELATION

This comprehensive questionnaire evaluates, consolidates, and reviews the theological foundations covered throughout Class 7.

I. Theological & Analytical Review

1. **Contextual Impact:** Discuss the historical significance of the Apostle John's exile on the island of Patmos. How does his physical isolation contrast with the spiritual and cosmic scope of the visions granted to him?
2. **Hermeneutical Comparison:** Compare and contrast the core assumptions of the *Futurist School* and the *Idealist School* regarding the interpretation of the symbols from Revelation 4 onward.
3. **Christological Unity:** Synthesize how the four living creatures of Revelation 4:6-8 connect with the four gospels. How does this fourfold portrait fully represent Christ's character for the Church?
4. **The Architecture of Redemption:** Explain how the measurements and foundations of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21) symbolize the structural completion and ultimate unity of God's redemptive history.

II. Practical Ministry Application

- **Scenario A (Counseling Through Suffering):** A leader in your discipleship group is facing severe external opposition and fatigue, feeling that evil is winning in their community. How would you utilize the throne room vision of Revelation 4 to restore their spiritual perspective?
- **Scenario B (Overcoming Spiritual Fear):** A church member confesses they are terrified of reading Revelation due to its severe descriptions of judgment. How would you guide them using the cross-centered framework of Revelation 12:11 ("overcame him by the blood of the Lamb")?

FINAL DEVOTIONAL APPLICATION GUIDE

For the New Testament Leadership Manual

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I will come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." — Revelation 22:20

As you finalize this manual of New Testament study, the Holy Spirit invites you to move from intellectual comprehension to a life of active, expectant devotion. The truths translated across these 7 classes are designed to produce a specific operational lifestyle within the global leadership team:

- **Walking in Absolute Certainty:** From Matthew's declaration of the King to Revelation's vision of the consummated Kingdom, your spiritual identity and ultimate destiny are permanently secure. The throne of God is unshakeable.
- **Ministering Without Fear:** Internalizing your legal acquittal through justification (Class 6) and your spiritual victory through the blood of the Lamb (Class 7) completely removes the fear of human rejection. You are free to lead with sacrificial, authentic love.
- **Preparing the Bride:** True leadership is focused on preparation. Every sermon outline you compile, every discipleship group you establish, and every devotion you share on your platform serves a single, majestic purpose: preparing a mature, holy, and faithful church for the return of her King.

Go forth and serve with holy confidence, knowing that He who called you is faithful, and He will bring His glorious kingdom to complete and absolute fulfillment!