

WEEK ONE READING: Matthew chapters 1 and 2 | Luke chapters 1 and 2 | John 1:1-18

#### HOUSEKEEPING:

Reason why the Gospels is a good place to start

Email list for additional content during the week

Class structure: start promptly at 9:45; 5 minutes social time; 50 minutes lesson discussion

After Hours fellowship – Sunday evenings, 5ish? 1/25?

Study blog website: [www.grace4nj.com/follow-jesus-through-the-gospels-the-400-years-before/](http://www.grace4nj.com/follow-jesus-through-the-gospels-the-400-years-before/)

YouVersion Sunday School group: [www.a.youversion.com/groups/grace4njwomen](http://www.a.youversion.com/groups/grace4njwomen)

#### INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPELS

MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Jesus represented as King	Jesus represented as Servant	Jesus represented as Son of Man	Jesus represented as Son of God
Written circa 50-60AD, originally in Hebrew	Written circa 50-60AD (believed to be the first written gospel account)	Written circa 60-65AD, originally in Greek	Written circa 85AD
Written by the apostle Matthew	Written by a scribe and companion, John Mark, as an account of Peter's experiences	Written by a Gentile physician, Luke, as a letter to Theophilus (vs. 1:3-4) and the Greek church at large	Written by the apostle John
Most likely written in Palestine or Syria	Possibly written in Rome, accompanied by the Apostle Peter	Possible locations at the time of his writing are Caesarea, Achaia, Decapolis, Asia Minor or Rome	Most likely written in Syria or Asia Minor (Ephesus)
Matthew's primary audience was the Jews. His purpose was to show them that Jesus of Nazareth was the expected Messiah.	Mark's primary audience was the early church. His purpose was to present Peter's account of the life and sayings of Jesus as an instructional tool for new believers.	Luke's primary audience was the Gentiles (Theophilus as Greek nobility and other Gentile officials). His purpose was specifically designed (along with Acts) to aid Paul in his trial before the Caesar.	John's primary audience was Christ-followers. His purpose was to confirm and secure Christians in the faith. (vs 20:31)
Matthew's writing style was very Jewish – very evidentiary; quoted Old Testament passages 62 times; assumed the reader's understanding of Jewish culture; used reverential Jewish expressions.	Mark's writing style is in the form of a story; it focuses more on the human angst of coming into the understanding of who Jesus was than the theology of Jesus.	Luke's writing style is sophisticated Greek, which would have appealed to the philosophical bent of the Greeks of that day.	John's writing style is very artistic – using word pictures and analogies to highlight the uniqueness of 'the Word made flesh'.

*We study Him to know Him, and by knowing Him, learn how to better live for Him.*

**PROLOGUES, Luke 1:1-4 and John 1:1-18**

Each of the writers had a unique platform to share the story of Jesus to a people group, with their own filter of experience and personality. We have to remember that this was during a time in history when the written word was not mass-produced. However, that does not imply that the people of this era were ignorant or unintelligent. There is supporting archaeological evidence that reading and writing were common skills among men of this era. Most Jews would have been tri-lingual: fluent at least in Hebrew, Aramaic and Koine Greek; the Jewish Scriptures (Old Testament) were translated into Greek between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries B.C.; Latin had already been present for about 200 years when Roman forces dethroned the Greek forces and was used in the governmental seat of Rome. Each language served a purpose and was necessary for survival in the Roman-oppressed region.

It is beneficial to understand the purpose of each writer's gospel account to understand why certain events were included or omitted and why Jesus was portrayed differently. You can sense the emotional attachment of each writer to certain themes. You can also feel the bias toward the writer's focus group by how certain details or applications are expounded.

We will continue to draw attention to that during this study to gain more understanding of each gospel account.

What was Luke's desire for the reader of his gospel account? *That you may know the certainty of the things about which you have been instructed*

What should be our goal as we study the gospel accounts of the life of Jesus? *That we may know the certainty of the things about which we have been instructed*

The Gospel according to John was the last written gospel account and his primary audience was the educated Greek believers and seekers in Asia Minor. During this time period, the Greeks were very driven to gaining knowledge and schools of philosophy were in many major towns.

The word 'logos' was first introduced by Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, in 560BC. It was first used in reference to 'a fixed principle in a world of change' and was his way of alluding to a higher power. Greek philosophy had one goal in mind, which was *gnosis* – the gaining of knowledge. John's gospel immediately greets the Greek gnostic with a more narrow definition of logos – the *Logos* became flesh and dwelt...and that analogy captured their attention as a way to increase their *gnosis* of spiritual truths.

What other imagery does John use to describe Jesus? *The Word; the Life; the Light*

Who is introduced in John 1:6 and what was his purpose? *John the Baptist; he came to testify about the Light*

What else do we know of this messenger from Luke 1:13-17? *Born of Zechariah and Elizabeth; given his name by the angel; will never drink wine or beer; will be filled with the Holy Spirit; he will go in the spirit of Elijah to turn the hearts of the people*

**SETTING THE STAGE FOR JESUS' ARRIVAL, Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 1:1-80**

Both Matthew and Luke provide the genealogy of Jesus – Matthew through the seed of Joseph and Luke through the lineage of Mary. Considering each writer's target audience, why was the genealogy important to include? *Matthew was establishing the Jewish lineage through the house of David; Luke was establishing the human lineage back to Adam*

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Matthew is the only New Testament writer to use the name Emmanuel (1:23); Isaiah is the only Old Testament writer to use the name Immanuel (7:14; 8:8). What is the significance of making such an obvious cross-reference to writings of the prophet Isaiah (consider Matthew's audience)? *He was drawing the connection between the prophecies of old and the fulfillment of it*

There were approximately 400 "silent years" between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Previous to those silent years were 200 years of history which included the Jews' captivity and Daniel's service in Babylon; the fall of Babylon; the return of the Jews from exile; the end of the oppression of the Jews in Esther; the rebuilding of the Temple by Nehemiah; and the foreboding prophecies of Malachi. *{more reading on the "silent years" can be found at [www.GotQuestions.org/400-years-of-silence.html](http://www.GotQuestions.org/400-years-of-silence.html)}*

What might be some descriptions the Jewish state of mind and emotion at the time of Jesus toward Isaiah's prophecy of an Emmanuel? *Lost hope; skepticism; oppression; wanting a reason to hope again*

If they were to believe that this Jesus is the Immanuel, what would they expect Him to do for them? *Cease the oppression of Rome; bring about a conquering king of Israel*

Jumping ahead to Matthew 28:20, what might Matthew be reinforcing by including Jesus' statement, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"? *His confidence that Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Immanuel being God with us*

Name a few events from this week's Bible readings that required the comfort of "God with us" for Mary and Joseph? *Trust that the angel's message wasn't just a dream; the fear of what people would think; safety in travels during late pregnancy; protection from King Herod*

### **APPLICATION FROM WEEK ONE**

Each of us has different expectations of God and often we envision Him to provide in certain ways that fit those expectations. The danger in confining Jesus to a certain expectation is that we can fail to recognize Him the way He intends to reveal Himself to us.

Name an event or two from your personal life where you were able to recognize the evidence of "God with us": *Abby's surgery; God's moving us to a new ministry*

Name an event or two from your personal life where you had/have difficulty recognizing "God with us": *the early days of dealing with some medical issues; our leaving our ministry in Colorado*

*Many of the Jews at the time of Jesus were looking for signs but couldn't see them. Are there circumstances in your life that need God's intervention to reveal Himself as God with you? Make that your prayer this week that He would reveal Himself where you can't see.*

**Memory verse:** Because of our God's merciful compassion, the Dawn from on high will visit us to shine on those who live in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. Luke 1:78-79 (HCSB)

**Week Two reading:** Matthew chapters 3 - 4 | Mark chapter 1 | Luke chapters 3 - 4 | John chapters 1 - 4

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