



4

Jesus in the Gospels

Key Theme

- God wants us to study His Word.

Key Passages

- Selected passages from the four Gospels

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe how Jesus is portrayed in each of the Gospels.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Write on the board, “What does each Gospel teach us about Jesus?”

Students will review the memory verse by working on the Memory Verse Puzzle and reciting the verse to a friend or to the class.

- Memory Verse Puzzle for each student from the Resource DVD-ROM



Studying God’s Word

Four Gospels written by four men—and all showing something unique about who Jesus is. Jesus is revealed in Matthew as the Jewish Messiah and promised King; in Mark as a suffering servant; in Luke as the Son of Man and friend of sinners; and in John as the Son of God, the Christ who alone brings eternal life.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.



Activity: Jesus Is . . .

Students will use the additional worksheet to take notes as you discuss the different perspectives on the person and work of Jesus in the Gospels. They can use this as a reference sheet to tuck into their Bibles.

- Jesus Is Worksheet from the Resource DVD-ROM
- Pencils



Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages listed above along with this background.

When we talk about “harmony” in the gospels, we are referring to the reality that the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, although different in many details and style, work in tandem to give the testimony of Jesus Christ and make up one account, as God ordained, to reveal who Jesus is, what He did, why He did it, how He did it, when He did it, and what He is still to do.

With that in mind, let’s explore each of the Gospels and consider what they teach us about Jesus.

We’ll start with the tax collector, Matthew (whose name was changed from Levi). At Jesus’s simple words, “Follow me,” Matthew “left all, rose up, and followed Him” (Luke 5:27–28). As an apostle, Matthew became one of Jesus’s closest friends. It is believed that as Matthew wrote his testimony of Jesus, he may have had his fellow Jews in mind. And the writing style of this author suggests that Matthew wanted to convince his Jewish brothers that Jesus truly was the Messiah and the King promised from the throne of David (Matthew 1:1, 1:6). In fact, Matthew quotes from the Old Testament—the Scriptures so familiar to the Jews—more than 60 times, revealing how Jesus was the fulfillment of these prophecies (e.g., Matthew 1:22–23, 2:5–6, 2:15).

As we move on to the Gospel of Mark, we learn that Mark was a companion and spiritual son to one of the Lord’s closest friends, Peter (1 Peter 5:13). Like Matthew, Mark had his own personal style as he wrote of the life of Christ under the direction of the Holy Spirit. He does not quote as often from the Old Testament, leading some to believe this Gospel was written not only to the Jews but to the Gentiles as well. As we harmonize this Gospel with the others, we see that Mark focused on Jesus as a suffering Servant—revealing more of what He did and recording less of what He said. Mark sums up this theme of “suffering Servant” when he tells us that even the Son of Man, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, did not come to be served, but to serve. And in that service, He would ultimately suffer and give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).

The Gospel of Luke and his “orderly account” of the life of Christ is the next Gospel we will explore. Luke was a physician and a close companion to the Apostle Paul. He wrote this book to the “most excellent Theophilus” (Luke 1:3). It is believed that Theophilus may have been a dignitary of some sort—perhaps from

Rome. It is also believed that Luke was a Gentile—not a Jew. These opinions fit well with the theme of Luke’s book, presenting Jesus as the Redeemer of humanity. Jesus is often referred to in this Gospel as the Son of Man, a title He used for Himself more frequently than any other name.

One verse that sums up the essence of the Gospel of Luke is Luke 19:10: “for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” This verse reveals Christ as Man in human flesh who consistently sought out sinners that they might be saved. We witness this in the account of the despicable tax collector and sinner Zacchaeus (Luke 19:5), in the miraculous healings (Luke 6:8, 7:10), and in Jesus’s willingness to raise the dead (Luke 7:13–15). Not only did Jesus seek out sinners, but also Luke portrays Jesus as one who repeatedly showed compassion to women (Luke 7:13), to Samaritans (Luke 10:33), and to children (Luke 18:15–16). And in the parable of the prodigal son, Jesus paints a picture of the loving, compassionate Father who is eager to welcome repentant sinners and forgive the humble heart that willingly turns away from sin and to God (Luke 15:11–32).

That brings us to the Gospel of John. As mentioned in Lesson 3, the Gospel of John is very different from the three Gospels already mentioned here. John clearly cites his reason for writing this Gospel: “but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:31). This verse states John’s two-fold purpose—to encourage his readers to believe in Jesus and to present Jesus as the Son of God—fully God and fully man. Throughout his Gospel, John repeatedly makes his plea to his audience to believe in Jesus (John 1:7, 3:16, 5:24, 6:29, 11:25–26.) Also, John presents Jesus as the eternal God, describing Him as the Word who was in the beginning, who was with God, and who was God—the very Word who became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:1, 1:14).

What a beautiful testimony these four unique accounts of Jesus Christ are as they communicate God’s revelation to man. By the power of the Holy Spirit, who inspired these books, we have the history of Jesus Christ, the God-Man, presented through a tax collector (Matthew), a Jewish friend (Mark), a Gentile doctor (Luke), and a Jewish fisherman (John). Only God could have sovereignly woven these lives together with the life of Christ to bring about this amazingly accurate and life-changing account. To Him alone be all the glory for His Word and the redemption it offers all who believe.

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

God knew what He was doing when He directed the writing of the Gospels. You might be thinking that is one of the most obvious things you have ever heard. But when you really dig into the differences of the four Gospels, God's wisdom becomes evident. As you read above, each of the Gospels has a slightly different angle on the life of Christ. In a sense, each is written to bring the message of the gospel into a context that makes sense to different people with different backgrounds and different cultural practices—both Jews and Gentiles (Acts 26:22–23).

The Apostle Paul explains this approach in 1 Corinthians 9:19–23:

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law [Jews], to those who are without law, as without law . . . that I might win those who are without law [Gentiles]; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.

Paul was willing to approach Jews, Gentiles, and the weak with the gospel message delivered in a unique way to each unique group so they could relate to and better understand what was being taught. He did this without compromising his own conscience toward the holy God he served and without compromising the core gospel message of repentance toward God and faith in Jesus (Acts 20:21).

An example of the same gospel to different audiences is illustrated for us in the book of Acts by Peter and Paul. Both of these men boldly proclaimed the hope of reconciliation in Jesus, but in different ways. In Acts 2, we have a record of a proclamation of the gospel message given by Peter on Pentecost. Luke, the author of Acts, described what happened during this Jewish festival in Jerusalem. Although the people listening to Peter were from many different nations, they all shared the same religious heritage—belief in and knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures (Acts 2:7–11). Consequently, Peter's message included many

passages from the Old Testament writings. Peter did not need to explain ideas like sin and judgment because his audience was familiar with these ideas. When he talked of the prophet Joel and the patriarch David, he didn't need to offer an introduction—Peter knew his audience was familiar with these men and the Old Testament accounts he preached from (Acts 2:16–39). Peter was living in and preaching to a Jewish culture. And he presented the message of repentance and faith in Christ in light of that context.

Paul, on the other hand, in the message he preached to the Greeks at the Areopagus (Acts 17:22–24), knew his audience did not possess knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures. So, Paul started this message from the beginning, explaining who God is: that there is but one God who created the world and everything in it, that this God determines the events of the world, and that He is the only God worthy of the praise and honor of all men. Paul recognized that those listening to this message had not heard of God's judgment or the Resurrection of Jesus (Acts 17:22–31). And he had to lay that foundation before calling his hearers to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

As we tell others about Jesus Christ and the Bible, it is important to know what their foundation in the Scriptures is. What have they heard? What is their frame of reference when it comes to the gospel? This will help us to better understand where to begin as we proclaim the life-giving good news of Jesus Christ.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Sovereign Lord, thank you for the beautiful testimony of these four unique accounts of Jesus. I am filled with joy as I see how your sovereign hand guided these men to write their accounts perfectly in order to harmonize with each other. How can I help but praise you again for your holy Word and for using sinful man to write it down. Seeing your hand at work in this way helps me grasp the bigger picture that is always going on around me. Your will is being done, and you allow me to do my small part by being obedient to you, as your Spirit guides me. I pray that as I teach this lesson, my students will be inspired to move from just knowing about you, to knowing you as Lord and Savior.

Review

Our lesson last week was an introduction to the four Gospels that open our New Testaments. The Gospels are accounts of the life of Christ, but they are not biographies in our modern sense.

? How do the Gospels differ from our modern understanding of a biography?

Rather than being detailed, chronological descriptions, the Gospels each present a portrait of Jesus that, taken together, presents an adequate understanding of what Jesus did while on the earth.

As we read the Gospels, we don't get an exhaustive account of the life of Jesus. There are large portions of time missing, especially His young life, and each of the Gospels jumps over certain events and presents the actions and words of Christ in slightly different ways.

We can trust that what we have been given is a sufficient revelation in light of the rest

of Scripture to let us know our Savior. This trust comes from knowing the character of our God and knowing that He has given us knowledge of all things we need to live a godly life as Jesus did (2 Peter 1:2–4).

Today we are going to continue looking at the Gospels, identifying the main theme of each. Our lesson will be a bit different since we are going to be looking briefly at each Gospel to see how Christ is portrayed.

As you leave class today, you will be able to give a brief statement of what each of the Gospels has to say about the person and work of Jesus Christ. I trust this will be a blessing to you and a help as you seek to share Christ with those who don't know Him more than to yell at Him when they smash their finger or get angry at the driver in front of them.



Jesus Is . . .

MATERIALS

- Jesus Is . . . Worksheet for each student
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Print one Jesus Is . . . Worksheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Pass them out before class begins.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

This worksheet I am passing out will help guide our time in the Word today and give you a reference sheet to tuck into your Bible. You can jot down notes here as we walk through the lesson today.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

Our look at the Bible today is going to be a bit different. We are going to be moving through multiple references in each of the Gospels and trying to identify a theme and the intended audience. As I mention a passage, someone can read it and then we will unpack each a bit. Let's start by reading some passages from Matthew together. *Have someone read the passages aloud as you come to them.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? How does Matthew open his Gospel in Matthew 1:1? *He introduces a genealogy of Jesus Christ through David and Abraham.*
- ? What audience would Matthew have in mind with an opening like this? *He would seem to have a Jewish audience in mind since he talks of one of their kings and the patriarch Abraham. This can be completed on the student worksheet.*
- ? What title is given in verse 1? *Son of David, a reference to the kingship of Jesus.*
- ? What do each of the following passages have in common: Matthew 9:27, 12:23, 15:22, 20:30, 21:9, 21:15, 22:42? *The title Son of David is used to refer to Jesus.*
- ? Let's turn back to chapter 2 to the visit of the wise men. Who were the wise men looking for according to verses 1–6? *They were looking for the baby born to be King of the Jews. The prophecy of the Messiah being born in Bethlehem is given to support this idea.*
- ? What does a king rule over? *A kingdom.*
- ? What do these passages have in common: Matthew 3:2, 4:17, 7:21, 13:11, 19:14? *Overall, 31 verses in Matthew reference the "kingdom of heaven" while none of the other Gospels use that phrase.*
- ? What light does Matthew 27:11 shed on the topic of Jesus as King of the Jews? *He affirms Pilate's assertion that He is the King of the Jews. This is affirmed in verses 29, 37, and 42.*

Discover the Truth

God had promised David that He would give him an everlasting throne. Those prophecies were known to the Jews who had those written revelations from God. Matthew takes great care to show how Jesus descended from Abraham through the line of David. He also takes great care in pointing out around 60 Old Testament passages that relate to Jesus coming, many of them related to His role as King of kings through the line of David. On your Jesus Is . . . Worksheet, you can fill in Matthew. *Use the Jesus Is . . . Answer Key to help the students complete the Matthew part.*

➤ Write on the board, "What does each Gospel teach us about Jesus?"

➤ If time is short, just pick a few of the verses where multiple passages are cited.

Matthew 1:1

Matthew 9:27, 12:23, 15:22, 20:30, 21:9, 21:15, 22:42

Matthew 2:1–6

Matthew 3:2, 4:17, 7:21, 13:11, 19:14

Matthew 27:11

God demonstrates His faithfulness in bringing Jesus to be the King of the Jews, just as He had promised to David. Jesus is the Son of David, King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus is King of the Jews.

READ THE WORD

Let's move on to Mark's Gospel. We are going to read three passages, so listen for the common thread. *Have someone read the passages aloud as you come to them.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

Mark 1:40-42, 6:33-34, 8:1-3

? What common idea was present in each of the passages? *Jesus had compassion for the people He encountered.*

? How did Jesus demonstrate His compassion in these passages? *He cleansed a leper, He taught the people who had no teacher (shepherd), and He fed the people who were hungry.*

Mark 1:10, 12, 18, 20, 21, 28, 31, 42

? Look at Mark chapter 1, specifically verses 10, 12, 18, 20, 21, 28, 31, and 42. What word do you see repeated? *He uses the word "immediately" eight times in the first chapter. Mark moves the narrative along very quickly.*

Mark 10:45

? What does Mark 10:45 reveal about the mission of Jesus? *He came to serve others and to give His life as a ransom. The title of Suffering Servant is often applied to Jesus based on this passage and others.*

Discover the Truth

One of the interesting features of Mark's Gospel is that he does not quote the Old Testament very often. It seems that he had a broader audience in mind than Matthew. Both Gentiles and Jews can read his record and understand what is presented. *Have the students record the audience on their worksheet.*

There are many ways we might identify the character of Jesus highlighted in Mark's Gospel, but the role of Suffering Servant seems to be a fitting title. He came as a compassionate servant who was willing to suffer on the Cross for our sins. He is truly the model servant for all of us to look to. *Use the Jesus Is... Answer Key to help the students complete the Mark part.*



READ THE WORD

Next, let's take a look at Luke's Gospel account starting in chapter 5. *Have someone read the passages aloud as you come to them.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

Luke 5:27-32

? What concern did the scribes and Pharisees bring to the disciples of Jesus? *They were concerned that Jesus was eating and associating with sinners.*

? **What metaphor does Jesus use to describe Himself and the tax collectors?** *He refers to Himself as a physician come to heal the sick. The patients are the sinners who need repentance as a cure.*

? **What does Jesus's response tell us about His mission?** *He points out that it was His intention to come to the earth to call sinners to repentance.*

? **What failure of the Pharisees was Jesus pointing out?** *They had failed to even offer a cure for the disease of sin, but simply avoided the sick patients—they were poor physicians.*

Luke 19 has another passage of Jesus in the home of a sinful tax collector, Zacchaeus.

Luke 19:5–10

? **How is Zacchaeus viewed in verse 7?** *Everyone considers him a sinner unworthy of the company of Jesus.*

? **What did Zacchaeus recognize about himself?** *He saw his unworthiness and his sin of stealing and lying. He sought to repent of those things and correct the wrongs he had done.*

? **What does Jesus acknowledge about Zacchaeus's repentance?** *It is an outworking of his salvation.*

? **How does Jesus refer to Himself?** *He calls Himself the Son of Man.*

? **What does Jesus identify as His purpose?** *He has come to seek and save the lost.*

Discover the Truth

You will remember from our study last week that Luke, a Gentile, wrote his Gospel to a fellow Gentile, so he clearly had a Gentile audience in mind as he wrote (Luke 1:1–4). *Have the students record the Gentile audience on their worksheet.*

In Luke's account, there are many examples of Jesus interacting with people considered unclean or unworthy by the Jewish religious leaders. There are interactions with women and raising the dead (Luke 7:13–15), healing Gentiles (Luke 7:1–10), and other outcasts. Luke presents Jesus as the Redeemer of Mankind, not just the Jews. *Use the Jesus Is... Answer Key to help the students complete the Luke part.*



READ THE WORD

That brings us to the final Gospel, John's account beginning in chapter 1. *Have someone read the passages aloud as you come to them.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

? **What word or concept do we find in each of these passages?** *They all talk of believing in Jesus as the Savior and Son of God.*

? **What are the results of believing in Jesus?** *That men will know the Light, become children of God, and receive everlasting life.*

John 1:7, 1:12, 3:15–18,
17:1–5

- ? What do these three passages tell us about how long Jesus has existed? *Since He was in the beginning with God as God; Jesus is eternal.*
- ? What role did Jesus have in the beginning of the universe? *He was the Creator who made all things.*
- ? What does John 1:14 tell us happened to the Word? *He became flesh and dwelt among us. This is the incarnation of Jesus to become the God-man.*
- ? Why does John present all of this evidence for Jesus being both a man and God? *In 20:30–31, John makes it clear that he hopes the readers will believe in Jesus as the Christ (Savior) and find eternal life in Him.*

Discover the Truth

John also seems to have a broad audience in mind, demonstrating that Jesus was God in the flesh who has existed since before time began. So his audience was both Jews and Gentiles. *Have the students record Jews and Gentiles for the audience.*

The word “believe” in various forms is more than 100 times in John’s Gospel account. John surely wants those reading his account to believe a very specific thing. He wants them to believe Jesus is the Son of God. *Have the students record Son of God on the worksheet.* In the book of First John, he also makes it clear that he wants others to know and enjoy the same fellowship with God the Father and God the Son through God the Holy Spirit by believing in Jesus as both the Creator and the Savior. *Use the Jesus Is... Answer Key to help the students complete the John part.*



Applying God’s Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

As we think about the record we have of our Savior’s time on the earth, we have a full and robust description of His character and work. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, these four writers have revealed the Savior to us as God who became flesh to take His place as the King of the Jews, to suffer as a Servant to all, redeeming people from all the tribes and nations of mankind.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- ? In the last two lessons, we have talked a lot about the four Gospels that reveal the life events of our Savior while He walked the earth. What has been the most helpful piece of information you have gathered and how is it helpful to you? *Discuss various answers, affirming those who are growing in their understanding at various levels.*
- ? We talked about four different titles for Jesus today (King of the Jews, Suffering Servant, Redeemer of Mankind, and Son of God). Which of those is the most difficult for you to understand? *Discuss various answers acknowledging that we accept these ideas by faith. Which of those titles is most meaningful to you and why? Discuss various answers.*
- ? How do people in our culture, especially those who are skeptical of the Bible, understand Jesus differently than the titles we have talked about today? *Many have never seriously considered the Bible's claims about Jesus and only know Him from passing references or popular ideas about Him. We can help these people understand the truth by opening our Bibles and showing them who Jesus is.*
- ? How could you use the information we talked about today to disciple those who already believe and trust in Jesus as their Savior? *Encourage the students to engage with others in their workplace, school, or other settings who claim to be Christians but seem to lack assurance or understanding and application of the Scriptures. Teaching others the things that we have learned is a great way to deepen our knowledge of Jesus and help others do the same.*



MEMORY VERSE

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Praise God for the four men who wrote the Gospels and the way He wove their lives together with the life of Jesus to sovereignly bring about this amazingly accurate and life-changing account.
- Thank God for the salvation He offers to all who believe in the Jesus of the Bible.
- Ask God to help us know Jesus and to tell others about Him so their lives will be changed and they will have eternal life.

