



The Gospel According to ...

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The Bible is a library, with several books having the same titles. Kings and Chronicles are simply continuations. Peter and John are separate letters from the same author. Corinthians are separate letters to the same church.

The 4 gospels share the same subject but are independent writings with different audiences in mind. In a general sense that audience seems to be:

Matthew > **Jews** Mark > **Romans**

Luke > **all Gentiles** John > **Greek culture**

Themes? Emphasis?

Matthew – Jesus fulfilled the OT law and superseded its authority (5:17-48).

Mark – fast movement and quick paced events
Jesus = servant (10:45)

Luke – universal appeal... Jesus = son of man and Lord (6:5)

John – deep discussions of Jesus...light and darkness, life and death – possibly organized around 7 ‘SIGNS’ (miracles) (2:11, 4:54)

The 4 gospels differ in:

- **order** (chronology)
- **details** (variant names used ... disciples, genealogies, etc.)
- **coverage** (John records teachings not included in other three)

First 3 gospels do not record the name of the author in the text. The “writer” tag was added extremely early in the process of their copying. Our oldest surviving manuscripts simply have 2 words ... **kata** [according to] **Matthew**.

That the incarnation of God receives this “multiple” coverage in the Bible is quite significant. If quantity is emphasis, the message seems obvious!

Matthew, Mark, Luke (synoptic) describe many of the same events and use similar (or identical) wording. Apparently, there was common source material.

John describes 7 'signs/significant' miracles while making it very clear (20:30) that there were many others. He simply did not include them in his writing.

Under God's inspiration, these men wrote with an eye toward their target audience. This seems obvious from their individual language, emphasis, and chosen content.

GENEALOGY

Matthew > **“Abraham”**

Mark > **none**

Luke > **“Adam”**

John > **“WORD was with God at the beginning**

The writers are individual people
because God knew that the readers
would be individual people.

The mystery of divine revelation/ inspiration/ inscripturation (II Tim. 3:16, II Peter 1:21)

- God enabled the writer to grasp truth yet did not override their human consciousness. He guided their choice of content yet allowed their **minds** to organize their own thoughts and have their own **perspectives**. Like the incarnation, God was fusing together divine truth and human thought!

Why Are There 4 Gospels?
How Are They Different?

- Different **AUTHORS**
- Different **AUDIENCES**
- Different **AWARENESS**

Contradictions??? There always have been and always will be such claims.

1. We have none of the original writings (autographs).
2. Copying scrolls/parchments is a very error prone, intensive process.
3. Many “contradictions” are explainable and resolvable by those who actually try.
4. No single important Christian doctrine is threatened by a “contradiction” that a skeptic somewhere has unearthed.

Read the gospels not [simply] as history or theology. See them as history caught up in theology, theology transforming history. Read them not [simply] to learn facts about Jesus but to understand the mission of Jesus and its claim upon yourself. Yes, they are relics of a different time and place. However, their historical foundation is unimpeachable. Matthew was there! That's more than any modern skeptic can claim!