

THE GOSPELS AND ACTS IN THE BIBLICAL STORY

OVERVIEW

Jesus Christ of Nazareth (God in the flesh) is at the centre of the biblical story. The gospels are narratives of Christ's life, teachings, miracles, rejection by the Jewish religious establishment, His death and resurrection.

The gospels were written well after the Lord's ascension into the heavens. Matthew, Mark and Luke are 'synoptic,' meaning the narratives have contents that are similar. John's narrative has a comparatively distinct content.

The gospel writers made it clear that one "cannot understand Jesus without seeing how he fits into the old testament story that has preceded him--as the climax and fulfilment of the hopes expressed almost from the beginning of the story."¹

In the gospels, we learn about Christ's birth, ministry, ethics of the Kingdom of God, His death and resurrection.

In the Book of Acts, Christ's disciples witness the good news of God's salvation to both Jew and Gentile in Jerusalem, Samaria and to the ends of the world through the power of the Holy Spirit.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Matthew was one of the Lord's apostles. His audience were most likely Jewish Christians. Matthew emphasized that Jesus is Messiah and the King of the Jews: He started his narrative by tracing Christ's genealogy to David and brings up many references of His coming from the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament).

The gospel concludes with Christ's command to His disciples to take the good news to the whole world, making disciples of those who believe (i.e., the gospel of the Kingdom is for both the Jews and the Gentiles).

Key Verses: Matthew 16:16-19; 28:18-20

Key chapter: Matthew 12 (The Jews formally reject Jesus Christ as the Messiah).

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Mark (John Mark) was a companion of Paul and later of Peter. His audience was the church in Rome at the time.

¹ *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*, 267.

Mark devoted about two-thirds of his narrative on Christ's ministry in Galilee and about one-third on His final week in Jerusalem. Mark emphasizes that Jesus is both the Messiah and the Suffering Servant who wanted His identity kept secret.

Key verses: Mark 10:43-45; 8: 34-37

Key chapter: Mark 8

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Luke is the only Gentile author in the Bible. He was a companion of Paul. His narrative places Jesus in the context of world history (Luke 2:1, Luke 3:1-2).² To understand Luke one has to read Luke in conjunction with the Book of Acts.

The first part, which is the gospel of Luke, is the good news of God's salvation and the second part, which is the Book of Acts, narrates how Christ's followers proclaimed God's salvation of all humankind from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. The emphasis in Luke is not just the salvation of the Jews but that of the Gentiles too.

Key verses: Luke 1:3-4;19: 10.

Key chapter: Luke 15 (The three parables of lost sheep, lost coin and lost son).

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

It was written by John the Apostle. John's gospel emphasizes Christ's divinity, God's love for humanity, the role of the Holy Spirit and the meaning of discipleship (remaining in the vine is of the utmost importance to fruitfulness).

Key verses: John 1:11-13 and John 20:30-31.

Key chapter: John 3.

THE BOOK OF ACTS

Luke is the author of the Book of Acts. Many call the narrative Acts of the Apostles. In reality, the acts, teachings and guidance in the narrative could not have been possible but for the Holy Spirit. The Book emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is not a silent Partner in the proclamation of the gospel; in fact not only does He empower Christ's followers, He is the Church's Teacher and Guide. Without Him, the early Church would have been rudderless.

False doctrines, which has contributed to the apostasy in major denominations and in many Pentecostal and Evangelical churches, can be traced to the absence of the Holy Spirit.

² Ibid., 287.

Whoever (person, church, ministry or denomination) neglects the Holy Spirit loses God's Presence.

Key verses: Acts 1:8; 2:42-47

Key chapters: Acts 2, 15.

PLEASE READ THE VERSES AND CHAPTERS IN THESE NOTES

Blessings