

October 18

Mark 1

John 1

Luke 1

Hi everyone. I'm Margie Alford/Connections and Bellevue worship leader. Welcome to our accelerator for October 18th. We are starting the New Testament today! Hope you're excited!

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John – let me tell you a little about these amazing men.

Matthew was a tax collector before he was called as one of the Lord's Apostles. Because of that profession, we can guess that he was well educated and knew how to read and write, probably in several languages, including Greek. He also knew arithmetic.

He saw and heard many wonderful things while with the Savior, and it is likely he wrote down some of the sayings of Jesus as notes or in a journal. Later, these notes would have helped him when he wrote what he remembered about the teachings of Jesus.

In his book, Matthew often stresses that Jesus Christ is the Messiah and came to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies. Matthew wrote specifically to the Jews, who were familiar with those prophecies.

Mark was much younger than the other writers. His mother was a prominent follower of Jesus Christ. Acts 12:12 tells us that her house in Jerusalem was used as a meeting place for other disciples. From this verse we also learn that her son's full name is John Mark.

Mark was also a follower of Jesus Christ but would likely have been in his teens when the Lord was in Jerusalem. He may have seen and listened to the Savior on occasion. After the Resurrection, as Jesus' message was beginning to be spread, Mark traveled with the Apostle Paul. He then accompanied the Apostle Peter to Rome and stayed by him while he was in prison. Mark is known as Peter's interpreter, both in speech and in writing. As a fisherman from Galilee, Peter may not have spoken Greek fluently, so Mark interpreted for him.

In his book, Mark wrote down the observations and memories of Peter, one of the original Apostles. Mark's book reflects Peter's interest in spreading the gospel among the Gentiles.

Luke is an interesting writer because he did not know Jesus Christ personally. He became a follower after the Lord's death, when Paul taught him the gospel. Luke had been a physician, but he left that profession to travel with Paul. He had the opportunity to talk with many of the Apostles as well as others who were

eyewitnesses to special events or moments in the Lord's life. In the first few verses of his book, Luke says that he is going to write the things that eyewitnesses and other teachers of the gospel had to say about the Savior. Apparently he had the opportunity to talk to many who were present when Jesus taught or performed miracles.

One of the most amazing stories Luke wrote about was the birth of Jesus. Many Biblical scholars say that Luke probably got his information about Jesus's birth from Mary herself. Luke tells us about Mary's visit from the angel Gabriel -- about their conversation -- about her encounter with Elizabeth and the words each of them spoke. In chapter 2, he will even record for us some of Mary's secret thoughts, things she shared with no one else.

Who were the other people Luke interviewed about Jesus Christ? The list would have been long. Many of the people who knew the Savior would still have been alive and would have remembered such important times in their lives. Paul mentions that about 500 people saw Jesus after His Resurrection and that most of them were still alive when he was writing to the Corinthians.

John, or John the Beloved as he was known, served as one of the Apostles. His book was probably written last, as John seems to have already read the other Gospels before he wrote his own book. Often, instead of telling his version of an event or parable the others had already written about, he writes about things the other writers did not include. Also, John's Gospel includes the testimony of John the Baptist. It seems likely that he had some of the writings of John the Baptist.

John was writing to members of the Church, who already knew something of the Lord. John emphasizes Jesus's divine nature as the Son of God.

The very first thing I am sure you noticed is that John's start in writing his gospel is different from the other three.

Matthew, Mark and Luke are called the synoptic gospels because they present to us, for the most part, three different views of the same basic material.

But John's gospel is different. Apart from the crucifixion and the resurrection and a very small bit of other material like the story of the feeding of the 5,000, the things we find in this gospel are different. Even stories that sound similar.

Other than different events, there are some other notable differences also. John records for us some long conversations -- like the one with Nicodemus and unlike Matthew, Mark and Luke, John records none of the parables of Jesus. The other three gospels give great focus on Jesus' ministry in Galilee turning only to Jerusalem for the events of the end, but John basically skips over the Galilean material in order to concentrate on Christ's ministry during not one but several different trips to Jerusalem

-- trips that Matthew may not have shared and Mark and Luke may have known little about.

Now the obvious conclusion to be drawn from these initial comparisons is that John's gospel was written quite independently of the other three.

John tells us at the end of the Book just why he has written. In verse 30 and 31 of chapter 20 he says: "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

The usual position of New Testament scholars is that John wrote later than the other three gospelers. Some think he may have written his gospel as late as the last decade of the first century. In any case, having the other gospels in front of him, John wrote his account to fill in the blank parts and leave a record of the earlier trips to Jerusalem which may have been accomplished with a smaller group of disciples than the twelve, and of other events and teachings which, for whatever reason were omitted by the synoptic writers.

John begins his account in eternity past -- before creation -- before time, when only God existed. The prologue to John's gospel which is found in verses 1-18 of chapter 1 stands absolutely alone in New Testament literature. It is a masterfully built bridge, constructed by the Apostle John between the dusty soil of Palestine and the marble floor of the Greek academy. John is writing as an apologist. He is working with the facts of the gospel but is committed to making sense to the philosophically trained mind of the Greek. He hits upon the concept of logos -- the word which the Greeks understood as an eternal divine (though impersonal) principle. John says in effect the eternal idea that you believe to be behind the universe as we know it is not just an impersonal force, He is a personal God who created the world and who incredibly at a particular point in space and time became a man and lived with us.

John 1:14 is the climax of the prologue and one of the most important verses in all of the Bible: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."