

## THE GOSPELS IN GENERAL

Virgil Warren, PhD

### I. Form

- A. Large portions cover the triumphal entry to the ascension: Matthew **21-28**, Mark **11-16**, Luke **19:29-24:53**, John **12-21**
- B. Principle of selectivity: materials that show him as Messiah
- C. Emphasis on the resurrection: note Acts 4:33; Romans **1:1-7**; 1 Corinthians **15:1-11**

History in general, much less a “gospel” in particular, is neither a stream of consciousness nor a complete record. It is a selective account that operates like a dot-to-dot, moving from one direction-setting event to the next.

The gospels are more specialized than biographies. (1) The gospels do not give an even treatment of Jesus’ whole life. They deal mainly with his ministry, with only Matthew and Luke recording anything about his birth. Luke adds an account of his trip to Jerusalem at twelve years of age. (2) The gospels do not treat the ministry evenly either; they concentrate on the death-resurrection-appearances segment.

### II. Purpose: Luke **1:1-4**; John **20:30-31** (cp. **21:24-25**); Acts **4:33**

- A. Apologetic: “*Everything that Jesus began to do . . .*” (Acts **1:1**)

1. To lay a basis for Jesus as the Messiah (Matthew **16:16**; Mark **1:1**; John **20:30-31**)
  - a. Engendering faith (John **20:31?**)
  - b. Confirming faith (Luke **1:4**)

Despite their apologetic purpose, they are all anonymous works. It is easier for tradition to preserve the knowledge about authorship than to preserve the knowledge about his ministry itself.

2. To give written basis for believing in Jesus as Messiah: Luke **1:4**

- a. Preservation (cp. 2 Peter)
  - b. Circulation
  - c. Orderliness
  - d. Compactness
- ```

graph LR
    subgraph Brackets [ ]
        C[ ] --- O[Orderliness]
        C --- C[Compactness]
    end
    C --- E[efficiency]
  
```

They assisted proclamation in Palestine, where some of the events had been seen by different parts of the populus. They assisted thereafter in proclamation in Jewish centers outside the homeland and to Gentile that had no other access to the events of Christ's life.

3. To replace the oral testimony of dying eyewitnesses
- B. Didactic/catechetical: *Everything that Jesus began to . . . teach*" (Acts 1:1): to serve as a teaching base

### III. Occasion

- A. The imminent death of the apostles
- B. The Gentile mission
- C. The delay in Christ's return (?)